

January 27, 1998

Mother's twin have three-week age difference

TOLKS (AFP) — A year-old woman has been given birth to a girl, one of the other, Chantal, already a mother, had the twin by Caesarean section at a clinic in Jan. 15 after some 10 days of labour. The two were born at different times, but have been named after a brother, Benjamin, and a sister, Miriam, and their names are the same as their mother's.

Indian election candidates advise to go vegetarian

NEW DELHI (AFP) — Health groups have urged Indian election candidates to go vegetarian during the stress of the election campaign. The groups said that a vegetarian diet would help them to stay healthy and energetic. They also said that a vegetarian diet would help to reduce the risk of heart disease and other health problems.

Cannabis inspired Sgt. Pepper's 'Love Hearts' Club

LONDON (AFP) — Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band, the Beatles' most famous album, was inspired by a cannabis-induced vision, according to a new book. The book, 'Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band: The Story of the Making of the Album', says that the band's manager, Brian Epstein, was inspired by a cannabis-induced vision of the band's members as the Lonely Hearts Club Band.

Japanese tourist pleads not guilty to penguin killing

OSAKA (AFP) — A Japanese tourist has pleaded not guilty to the killing of a penguin. The tourist, a 30-year-old man, was charged with the killing of a penguin at a zoo in Osaka. The penguin was killed with a knife. The tourist's lawyer said that his client was not guilty of the killing.

Chicago museum asks kids to name dinosaur

CHICAGO (AFP) — A Chicago museum has asked children to name a dinosaur. The museum, the Field Museum of Natural History, has a new dinosaur skeleton that it has named. The museum is asking children to name the dinosaur. The museum said that the dinosaur was a new species and that it was named after a child.

Queen will not visit Israel — Royal Court

AMMAN (Petra) — The Royal Court on Tuesday dismissed as baseless the news broadcast by Radio Israel on Tuesday about Her Majesty Queen Noor visiting Israel next month. Radio Israel announced Tuesday evening that Queen Noor will visit Israel next month in response to an invitation made by the wife of Shas movement chief Itzhak Mordechai. The Royal Court spokesman described the news as baseless and said no such visit will take place.

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Jordan Times

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'Eid Al Fitr starts Thursday
AMMAN (J.T.) — Chief Islamic Justice Sheikh Izzeddine Al Khatib Al Tamimi Tuesday announced that Thursday will be the first day of 'Eid Al Fitr. In an announcement on Jordan Television, Sheikh Tamimi said the new moon of the Shawal Muslim month could not be traced on Tuesday night, and, therefore, Wednesday will be the 30th day of the fasting month of Ramadan, while Thursday, Feb. 1 1998, will be the first day of Shawal. To mark the occasion, ministries, government departments and public institutions will be closed from Wednesday morning until Sunday morning, according to a communiqué issued by Prime Minister Abdul Salam Al Majali earlier this week. The Jordan Times will observe a two-day holiday on Thursday and Friday. Hence, the next Jordan Times issue will appear on Sunday. The Jordan Times seizes this opportunity to wish its readers a happy 'Eid.

South Lebanon attacks kill man, wound woman

MARJAYOUN (R) — A 50-year-old Lebanese man was killed in a bomb explosion in south Lebanon on Tuesday, a pro-Israeli militia source said. Tanious Helou was killed when a bomb exploded near his pick-up truck on the road between Roum and Anan in Jezzine — an area officially outside Israel's south Lebanon occupation zone, but held by the pro-Israeli South Lebanon Army (SLA) militia. No group claimed immediate responsibility for the blast. Shortly after the attack, Israeli gunners opened artillery fire on south Lebanon villages in the eastern sector of the zone, wounding a 26-year-old woman identified by Lebanese security sources as Hiam Yassin. The sources said 50 shells landed around the village of Mashghara. Lebanese guerrillas — mainly the Hizbollah — are fighting to oust Israeli troops and the SLA from Israel's 15 km-wide occupation zone in south Lebanon. A 1996 U.S.-brokered ceasefire ended a 17-day Israeli blitz on Lebanon banned both Lebanese guerrillas and Israeli forces from targeting civilians on both sides of the border.

Three million Muslims pray in Saudi holy sites

DUBAI (R) — Nearly three million Muslims on Monday offered prayers in the Islamic holy cities of Mecca and Medina as the fasting month of Ramadan neared its end. Saudi newspapers reported on Tuesday, Ramadan ends on Tuesday or Wednesday depending on the sighting of the crescent moon of the Islamic month of Shawal when the world's one billion Muslims celebrate the feast of 'Eid Al Fitr. The papers said the Grand Mosque in Mecca and the Prophet's Mosque in Medina were overflowing with worshippers praying at the end of Ramadan. Prayers offered to mark the completion of reciting the Quran are considered to be the second most important prayers offered by Muslims during Ramadan after Laylat Al Qadr prayers on the 27th day of the fasting month.

Turkey reappoints ambassador to Libya

ANKARA (AFP) — Turkey has decided to reappoint an ambassador to Libya following a seven-month diplomatic crisis between the two countries, a foreign ministry official said here Tuesday. Turkey recalled its ambassador to Tripoli in last June after Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi publicly accused the Turkish army of being ruled by Israel and confronting the Arab Nation. Colonel Qadhafi was referring to Turkey's recently-boasted military ties with Israel. But the Turkish foreign ministry official told AFP that Ankara had decided to reappoint a new ambassador who would assume his post in Tripoli in the next few weeks. The official did not say what had prompted Turkey to upgrade diplomatic ties with Libya. It was not immediately clear if Libya, which had also withdrawn its ambassador to Ankara amid the crisis, would send an envoy to the Turkish capital. Libya currently owes more than \$1 billion to Turkish contracting companies operating in the country, and Turkey had failed to secure debt payments during the crisis.

Arafat rules out phased Israeli W. Bank pullback

GAZA (R) — Palestinian President Yasser Arafat on Tuesday rejected a U.S. proposal for a gradual Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank in return for a tougher Palestinian security crackdown. Asked if he agreed to a phased withdrawal, Mr. Arafat told reporters in Gaza: "Definitely not."

He was speaking on his return from a tour of European and Arab states to garner support for Palestinian demands that Israel implement a long-overdue withdrawal from the West Bank as outlined in interim peace deals since 1993. U.S. President Bill Clinton has proposed that the Israeli troop withdrawal take place in phases, with each step matched by a new Palestinian action to improve security.

Mr. Netanyahu said on Monday he was considering the U.S. plan. "We have not ruled out a possible staggered interim [pullback]. The Palestinians must fulfil part of their commitments and they will receive a certain part [of land]," he said. Israel said the issue at stake was Palestinian compliance with peace accords and not how Israel would implement its side of the bargain.

"Palestinian fulfilment of their agreements is at the heart of the U.S. proposal and therefore Chairman Arafat has to address himself not to the mechanism and technical aspects but... to finally honour signed agreements," Israeli government spokesman Moshe Fogel told Reuters. Mr. Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu met separately with Mr. Clinton in Washington last week to try to end the deadlock.

The United States said on Monday it believed both Israel and the Palestinians had accepted its proposal to advance peacemaking, even though they still differed on basic issues.

Palestinians have said they want Israel to pull back from at least 30 per cent of the disputed area, but Israeli news reports indicate Mr. Netanyahu refuses to go beyond 9.5 per cent.

The United States, which has called on Israel to carry out a "significant and credible" troop withdrawal, has urged the sides to meet halfway. British Prime Minister Tony Blair urged Israel in remarks published on Tuesday to stop building Jewish settlements on Arab lands and to implement other commitments to the Palestinians without delay.

"The continued building of new settlements is illegal, and in direct conflict with the principle of land-for-peace on which the whole peace process is built," he told the London-based Arabic newspaper Al Hayat. Britain currently holds the rotating presidency of the European Union.

Mr. Blair, who met Mr. Arafat in London on Monday, said it would be unwise to blame any party for the impasse in the peace process, but appeared to address the complaints of both Israel and the Palestinians.

He said Israel must implement its long delayed troop redeployments from the West Bank. "These redeployments need to be timely, substantial and credible and they should be implemented without preconditions."

"For the Palestinians, this means in particular, maximum and sustained effort in combating terrorism," Mr. Blair told Al Hayat.



Palestinian President Yasser Arafat waves to a crowd of well-wishers at the Rafah border crossing between Gaza and Egypt on Tuesday (AP photo)

Palestinians seek Arab-European summit against Israeli policies

GAZA CITY (AFP) — The Palestinians said Tuesday an Arab-European summit could be held in a bid to force Israel off hard-line positions they said have brought the peace process to a "dead end."

"There is Arab diplomatic motion now which I think will lead to an Arab summit. The only question is whether it will be a full summit or a mini summit," said top Palestinian negotiator Nabil Shaath. "I also do not rule out the possibility of a minisummit including leaders of some Arab and some European countries in order to save the situation," he said.

"The European role is not apathetic and it is not just an economic role. Europe insists on having a role of participation and initiative," Mr. Shaath said.

Palestinian President Yasser Arafat returned to Gaza Tuesday after talks in Cairo with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak about holding a summit, saying there was "a call for the holding of an Arab summit to assess the situation."

"We want an Arab summit to put down conditions and a strong position towards Israel if it continues in its rejectionist and intransigent policy towards the peace process," Mr. Shaath said.

Top Arafat aide Nabil Abu Rudeina said an Arab summit was needed "because the Israeli government has pushed the political situation to the brink of the abyss. The peace process has reached a dead end."

"The Palestinians will move on the Arab, European and international levels, especially now that the American administration has been unable to force Israel to stick to its commitments," Mr. Abu Rudeina said.

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Baghdad's firing Scud missiles at the Jewish state.

In Baghdad's busy Shorja market on Tuesday, few Iraqis showed concern that a U.S. military strike might be imminent. Shoppers packed its narrow lanes, stocking up for the Muslim feast of 'Eid Al Fitr, marking the end of the Holy Month of Ramadan when Muslims fast from dawn to dusk.

"We've been used to this since the war with Iran," said Bushra Kazem, a mother of three buying bright, pink, coconut covered sweets from a stall.

"These threats used to affect people. But it's become normal now. Let them make their threats," said Abbas, standing in front of sacks of nuts he was selling. "People are more worried about their food."

Ordinary Iraqis have been hard hit by sanctions imposed by the U.N. after Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait. A favourable report from the arms inspectors is needed before the sanctions can be lifted.

Russian envoy Mr. Posuvalyuk is expected in Baghdad on Tuesday evening after the 12-hour desert highway journey from Amman. Flights are banned under the U.N. sanctions.

Cabinet seems split over court ruling on temporary press law

By Sa'eda Kilani
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The Council of Ministers met in a regular session yesterday but contrary to expectations it did not adopt a position on the ruling taken a day earlier by the High Court of Justice to nullify the temporary press and publications law that the Cabinet introduced in May.

Informed sources told the Jordan Times that there might be different points of view within the Cabinet over how to respond to the ruling and that is why a formal discussion of it was not on the agenda.

But Minister of State for Information Affairs Samir Mutawi said that the government still awaits official notification of the court's decision before discussing a mechanism to implement it, which is mandatory under the Constitution.

Dr. Mutawi, while hailing the ruling as a vital step of democracy in the Kingdom, said that the government still

believes it should protect the public from possible violations by the press.

He told the Jordan Times in an interview yesterday that the Cabinet has not discussed the appropriate move to take, either in terms of issuing a new draft law or upholding the old one (enacted in 1993), but insisted that strict press regulations are still a necessity.

"The reasons that have led to the enactment of the May amendments are still there," Dr. Mutawi said. "The government should take the appropriate steps to ensure the protection of our citizens. The government that fails to maintain the fabric of society should not stay in office."

But other ministers contacted by the Jordan Times on Tuesday believed that the government should accept and implement the ruling without any delay.

"We believe in democracy. All rulings issued by the judicial authority should be respected by the State," said Minister of Health Ashraf

Kurdi. "If the government has any objections, it should discuss the matter with Parliament."

Two other ministers stressed that the ruling should be respected but did not spell out their own thinking on what should be the next step in dealing with the press law.

"There is no way out but to implement the decision," said Riyadh Shakra, a minister of justice. "The judiciary branch is the pride of the country and its decisions should be respected."

Tawfiq Khreishan, the minister of Municipal and Rural Affairs, agreed but both ministers refused to elaborate on how the issue should be approached until the government is officially notified by the court of its verdict.

It was evident however, that the court's decision took the government by surprise. This probably also explains why the government is hesitating in dealing with its aftermath.

(Continued on page 7)

Jordan supports collective Arab effort for peace — Mutawi

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Jordan said on Tuesday it did not receive any invitation for an Arab summit meeting in Cairo to discuss ways to revive the stalled Middle East peace process.

However, Minister of State for Information Affairs Samir Mutawi told reporters that Jordan would back any collective Arab effort to help push forward the deadlocked talks.

"We have not received any invitation," he said after a regular Cabinet meeting. "However, Jordan supports any collective Arab effort that would bring the peace process back on track."

Dr. Mutawi said Sunday's visit to Cairo by His Majesty King Hussein aimed at discussing the "dangerous junction that the peace process is passing through."

He added that Jordan and

Egypt were "coordinating efforts to prevent a halt in the peace process." He did not elaborate.

Palestinian President Yasser Arafat confirmed after meeting British Prime Minister Tony Blair on Monday that he was seeking a full meeting of the Arab League's 21 members.

Diplomats say he began pushing for such a gathering following the perceived failure of U.S. President Bill Clinton's latest efforts to revive Middle East peacemaking.

But they doubted whether Mr. Arafat would find much support for his call for a full meeting of Arab leaders as a result of deep divisions over Iran, the Middle East peace process and other regional issues.

Mr. Clinton met separately with Mr. Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Washington last week, but failed to bridge their differences over the size of an Israeli troop withdrawal from the West Bank.

While in Tunisia on Sunday, President Arafat called for an Arab summit after accusing Mr. Netanyahu of intransigence.

He flew to Egypt on Tuesday for talks with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak.

Cairo hosted the first Arab summit in six years in June 1996, a month after Mr. Netanyahu, a right-wing Likud leader defeated the then Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres at the polls.

Arab leaders agreed then to review concessions already given to Israel if Mr. Netanyahu deviated from existing peace deals. They have not met since.

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(Continued on page 7)



A GIFT FOR THE 'EID: A child victim of terrorism shows the toys he received from the Red Crescent Society Tuesday, one day before 'Eid Al Fitr, the last day of the Holy Month of Ramadan, at Algiers Pasteur Clinic (AFP photo)

Lebanon will not police border for Israel — army

BEIRUT (R) — Lebanon will not guarantee Israel's border security under a "distorted" implementation of a U.N. resolution demanding unconditional Israeli withdrawal from south Lebanon, army chief General Emile Lahoud said on Tuesday.

Gen. Lahoud, inspecting troops in the south, the last active Arab-Israeli frontline, said in a statement released by the army that Israel wanted to sidestep comprehensive peace negotiations and leave issues unresolved.

"Any [Israeli] guarantees outside the framework of comprehensive and just peace with both Lebanon and Syria are illusory guarantees,"

Gen. Lahoud said. Gen. Lahoud described recent Israeli talk of a possible withdrawal from Lebanon under Lebanese-Israeli security arrangements as "a distorted and conditional implementation of [U.N.] resolution 425."

The 1978 resolution calls for an immediate and unconditional pullout of Israeli troops from the south. Lebanese-Israeli peace talks are deadlocked over that issue.

Lebanese resistance forces, especially Hizbollah guerrillas, have been fighting to end the occupation by Israel and its South Lebanon Army (SLA), a Lebanese militia paid and trained by Israel.

Israel says the occupation is necessary to protect its own territory.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu repeated on Tuesday that troops would pull out if the Lebanese government deployed its forces in the area, dismantled Hizbollah and promised no harm would come to SLA militiamen.

"If these things take place, we'll leave right now," he told reporters in Israel.

Gen. Lahoud said the Israeli suggestion "aimed at reaching security measures in the best interest of Israel: the absorption of its client militias [within the Lebanese army] while the resistance would be

disbanded."

"This means Israel wants the Lebanese army to act as a policeman guarding the security of its borders in accordance with its conditions and interests while ignoring the fact that its withdrawal is a major part of the solution but not all of the solution," he added.

He cited Lebanon's 356,000 Palestinian refugees, dating back to Israel's creation in 1948, as an example of an unresolved issue that depends on a comprehensive regional settlement.

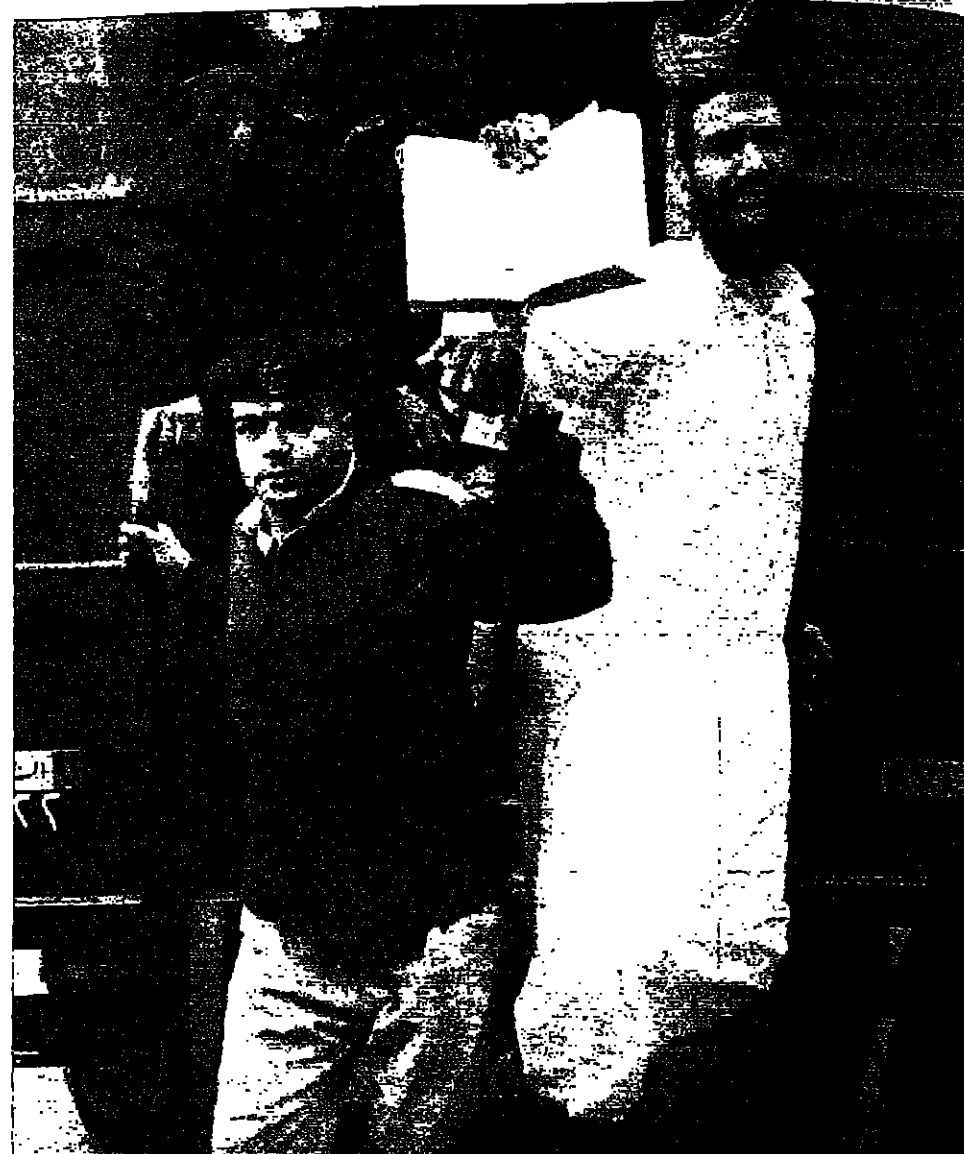
"When it [Israel] demands guarantees to get out of its security dilemma in the south while leaving behind several issues

pending like the Palestinians and their right to return... then its aim is to escape the obligations of just and comprehensive peace," Gen. Lahoud said.

Israelis and Palestinians are supposed to discuss the fate of Palestinian refugees in the last phase of their peace negotiations — currently at an impasse.

"Israel's betting on parts of peace on this track or the other does not produce peace... and the latest manoeuvre regarding the 425... will not cause a rift in Lebanese-Syrian relations," Gen. Lahoud said.

With 35,000 troops deployed across Lebanon, Damascus is Beirut's main power broker.



A militant chants and displays the Quran as he arrives at a state security court Tuesday under heavy security (Reuters photo)

Algeria gives cold shoulder to EU call

ALGIERS (AFP) — The EU's call for greater openness in troubled Algeria got a frigid response here Tuesday, with the newspaper closest to the government accusing Europeans of once again trying to meddle in domestic affairs.

"As expected, the European Union — now dominated by socialist governments — does not want to change its behaviour towards our country, opting instead for pressure, ambiguity and double-talk," the daily Al Moudjahid wrote.

"Little by little, Europe wants to interfere in our domestic affairs, because it regards 'transparency' as meaning only the presence of foreign observers on our soil," it said.

Such "internationalisation" of the troubles in Algeria can only "lead to chaos, not to stability" at a time when the north

African state is implementing "legitimate institutions based on democracy and pluralism," the newspaper said.

EU foreign ministers, meeting Monday in Brussels, urged Algerian President Liamine Zoual's regime to allow U.N. representatives to visit "in the near future."

They also demanded "greater transparency" from the authorities over massacres and bomb attacks — blamed on Islamists — that have reportedly claimed more than 1,000 lives just this month.

Independent newspapers in Algeria were critical of the EU stance as well, with Le Matin denouncing "the bad farce of the troika" and Al Watan evoking "a dialogue of the deaf."

The troika consists of the present, past and future presiding EU nations — Britain, Lux-

embourg and Austria — which sent a team of junior foreign ministers to Algiers a week ago.

Algeria's stance is that the past six years of violence is a domestic affair, and that if Europeans want to help, they should crack down on Islamist groups operating in exile from their countries.

Al Moudjahid said it hoped that relations with Europe could be "less impassioned, more reasonable, based on mutual respect and not on injunction."

The newspaper recalled a statement given Monday to French international radio RFI by Algerian Communications Minister Habib-Chawki Hamraoui, the Algerian government's spokesman.

He said it was time to stop talking in generalities, and to focus instead on "precise points, particularly on the struggle

against terrorism and dismantlement of support networks."

Mr. Hamraoui said the question of "who kills" in Algeria was one of "complicity in terrorism" as it cast doubt on "the image of the state, the forces of order and the people."

He went on to criticise some Arabic-language media which, he said, were playing the role of "central organ of terrorist groups."

Another pro-government newspaper, L'Authentique, criticised the "passive complicity" of the European Union towards terrorism, particularly, it said, in Britain.

The violence in Algeria goes back to 1992 when the military cancelled elections that Islamists were poised to win. Well over 60,000 have since died in massacres, bomb attacks and murders.

Peres says peace process not in danger

CARACAS (R) — Former Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres expressed confidence on Monday that the fragile Middle East peace process would ultimately prevail.

The peace process "is in crisis but not in danger," he told a news conference.

While criticising his successor Benjamin Netanyahu's handling of the peace process with the Palestinians, saying he made "several mistakes," Mr. Peres said he was optimistic in the long run.

"I am optimistic because nobody has an alternative [to peace]. Complaints are not an alternative," he said.

Mr. Peres, who arrived in Caracas on Sunday from neighbouring Colombia, spoke after meeting separately with Venezuelan President Rafael Caldera and Foreign Minister Miguel Burelli.

Mr. Peres, whose two-day visit was to promote the activities of the Shimon Peres Peace Centre in Israel, said both Mr. Netanyahu and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat would be ill-advised not to "fully" respect the Oslo peace accord.

"In democracy, you negotiate with words, not with swords," he said.

Mr. Peres was jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize with President Arafat in 1994 for their role in hammering out the Oslo peace agreement between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation.

Court reaffirms death sentences for 3 Islamists

CAIRO (AP) — A Cairo court on Tuesday reaffirmed death sentences handed down against three Islamists convicted in the slayings of 26 policemen.

Two of the Islamists remain at large.

The supreme state security court also sentenced 15 members of Gamaa Islamiya convicted in the slayings to prison terms ranging from five years to life.

In addition to killing the policemen in 1993-94, they also were accused of plotting to kill 46 other people, including policemen and their families, and they were charged with trying to blow up a train carrying tourists in 1992 and an attack on a bus carrying Romanian workers in 1994.

Thirteen men were acquitted. Some shouted "Allahu Akbar," the Islamic rallying cry meaning "God is Great," on hearing the verdict.

The court, headed by Judge Ismail Hamdy, initially issued the death sentences on Dec. 29. They had to be reaffirmed by the court after being approved by Egypt's mufti, the chief government cleric.

No executions are likely in the near future, however.

The two still at large — Rifaat Zeidan and Abdul-Hamid Othman — will have to be retried if they are captured.

Egypt sentences fifteen Islamists to hard labour

CAIRO (AFP) — Egypt's state security high court on Tuesday sentenced 15 members of the Islamist group Gamaa Islamiya to between five and 25 years in jail with hard labour for a series of deadly attacks.

They were accused of carrying out 19 attacks in the southern Egyptian provinces of Sohag and Asyut in 1992 and 1993, killing 26 police officers and injuring 35 other people, including five Romanians.

Last month the court sentenced to death three Islamists from Gamaa Islamiya for their roles in the attacks. Two were tried in absentia.

When the trial opened more than a year ago the prosecution demanded that all the defendants, who belong to the Gamaa's military wing, be sentenced to death or jailed for life with hard labour.

On Tuesday, four of the convicts were given 25 years with hard labour, three 15 years, five 10 years and three five years, court president, Ismail Hamdi, said.

A total of 33 people were on trial for the attacks but two died in prison and 13 were acquitted.

The third Gamaa member sentenced to death, Hassan Khalifa, uses a wheelchair because he was paralysed in 1994 when he was accidentally shot by another Islamist during a battle with police.

Egyptian law prohibits the execution of people who are disabled or terminally ill.

The Gamaa Islamiya has been blamed for much of the violence in a nearly six-year campaign aimed at toppling

and replacing it with strict Islamist rule.

More than 1,220 people have been killed since the start of the Islamist insurgency in 1992. Most of the victims have been policemen or Islamists, but Coptic Christians and foreigners also have been targeted.

The case originally involved 33 Islamists, but two of the defendants who were at large were killed in battles with police.

Palestinian minister intends to resign in protest to corruption — newspaper

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Palestinian Labour Minister Samir Ghoshe intends to resign to protest the failure of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) to take action against corruption and sign bills into law, a newspaper said Tuesday.

A source close to Mr. Ghoshe told AFP he had sent a message to Palestinian President Yasser Arafat's office announcing he would quit the cabinet, although Mr. Ghoshe himself refused to comment.

But Mr. Ghoshe will wait until President Arafat returns from abroad later Tuesday to formally sub-

mit his resignation, the source said.

Al Quds newspaper said Mr. Ghoshe decided to resign to protest "Arafat's failure to take a decision on an auditing report and on punishing wrongdoing."

The report issued in May exposed widespread mismanagement in the authority's ministries and led to reports of corruption by ministers and other officials.

Mr. Ghoshe was already among 16 of President Arafat's 22 ministers who submitted a mass resignation in August in response to the corruption reports.

At the time, Mr. Arafat

asked his ministers to stay, and he has since repeatedly promised to conduct a cabinet shake-up. But he has yet to announce a new cabinet or promised reforms to purge his administration of corruption and mismanagement.

In his message to Mr. Arafat's office, Mr. Ghoshe also protested President Arafat's failure to fully sign into law a bill on civil service passed late last year by the legislative council, the source said.

Mr. Arafat in December said he had signed part of the bill, but not its financial section, which would

reportedly cost millions of dollars for administrative reform in the civil service.

Mr. Ghoshe also protested the decision-making process in the PNA, pointing to the weekly cabinet meetings, which group the 22 ministers as well as the 18-member PLO executive council.

"The large numbers of officials at the weekly meetings, including officials who are not concerned [with the issues], creates an inability to take important decisions," he said in the message, the official said.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

11:05 ...Tennis Australian Open '98
12:05 ...Believe and Behave
12:15 ...French Film
13:30 The World's Greatest Magic
14:15 ...French Film
15:45 ...Interceptor
16:35 Documentary — National Geographic
17:00 ...Film — Suburban Commando
18:30 ...News Headlines
18:33 ...Comedy
19:00 ...News in French
19:30 ...Variety Programme
19:30 ...Keeping Up Appearance
20:00 Film — Gone With the Wind
22:00 ...News in English
22:30 Film — The Nutty Nut
23:55 Concert (from Amsterdam)
01:05 ...The Nature of Things
01:55 Tennis Australian Open '98 (live)

PRAYER TIMES

05:08 ...Fajr
06:28 ...Sunrise/Duha
11:49 ...Dhuhr
14:44 ...Asr
17:09 ...Maghreb
18:29 ...Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Sweifbeh, Tel. 810740

Assemblies of God Church

Tel. 632785.

St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590

Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440.

De la Salle Church Tel. 661757.

Terra Sancta Church Tel. 622366

Anglican Church Tel. 652826.

Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331.

Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261.

St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751.

Amman International Church Tel. 5516245

Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 824328.

German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 688404

The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932.

Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691.

The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295

English-speaking Latin Catholics Parish Tel. 614190.

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology. Relative cold weather conditions will prevail with skies partly cloudy. Clouds will build up in evening with a chance of scattered showers in the northern parts of the Kingdom gradually extending to

cover all other regions. Winds will be southwesterly moderate to active. In Aqaba, skies will be partly cloudy with a chance of scattered showers. Winds will be southerly moderate and seas rough.

Amman04/12

Aqaba10/20

Deserts02/14

Jordan Valley10/21

Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 12, Aqaba 19 Humidity readings: Amman 53 per cent, Aqaba 45 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

Dr. Bassam Karadshah 4389200

Dr. Salman Daboubi776751

Dr. Ramzi Mazzawi894788

Dr. Khalid Abdo657129

Firas pharmacy661912

Ferdous pharmacy890280

Al Asena pharmacy637055

Al Salam pharmacy636730

Yacoub pharmacy644945

Shmeisani pharmacy 637660

Nairokh pharmacy623672

Najib pharmacy847632

IRBID: Dr. Fawzi Abul Hajja252970

Al Quds pharmacy(—)

ZARQA: Dr. Samir Al Lawzi989601

Khalifeh pharmacy985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre. 637111

Civil Defence Department 661111

Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 630341

Civil Defence Emergency/199 Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777

Fire Brigade617101

Blood Bank775121

Highway Police843402

Traffic Police896390

Public Security Department 630321

Hotel Complaints605800

Price Complaints661176

Water and Sewerage Complaints897467

Amman Municipality Complaints787111

Telephone Information (directory assistance)121

Overseas Calls010230

Central Amman Telephone Repairs623101

Abdali Telephone Repairs 661101

Jordan Television773111

Radio Jordan774111

Water Authority680100

Jordan Electricity Authority 815615

Electric Power Company 636381

RJ Flight Information 44-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN: Hussein Medical Centre 813813/32

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Jabal Amman Maternity 642362

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Palestine, Shmeisani 607071

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Amal Hospital674155

The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery865199

ZARQA: Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983323

Zarqa National Hospital (09)900560

Ibn Sina Hospital (09)986732

Al Hikma Modern Hospital (09)990990

IRBID: Princess Basma Hospital (02)275555

Greek Catholic Hospital (02)272275

Ibn Al Nafees Hospital (02)247100

AQABA: Amman (Marka Airport) (PF)

Princess Haya Hospital

(03)314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (44)53200 where it should always be verified.

Information on other flights are supplied on phone 44 (52700) or 44(53250).

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights

07:25Damascus (RJ)

08:05Larnaca (RJ)

08:25Jeddah (RJ)

08:50 Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)

09:55Ghardaqa (add) (RJ)

15:00 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)

17:05Paris (RJ)

17:30Istanbul (RJ)

17:45Madrid, Geneva (RJ)

18:10Rome (RJ)

18:30London, Berlin (RJ)

23:10Frankfurt, Vienna (RJ)

23:10Beirut (RJ)

00:05Cairo (RJ)

Other Flights

05:50Bucharest

London and Dublin try to give impetus to Northern Ireland talks

LONDON (AFP) — London and Dublin attempted Tuesday to inject new life into the Northern Ireland peace talks after representatives of a Protestant militia which has killed at least three Catholics in recent weeks were forced out of the talks.

The two governments were to outline a key proposal for a cross-border body linking Ulster and the Republic of Ireland, which would give Dublin a role in the British-ruled province's affairs for the first time.

As sectarian violence continued in Belfast, where a man narrowly escaped being murdered overnight, British Prime Minister Tony Blair prepared to meet all sides in the talks, which Monday moved to London for three days.

There is no sign of any end to the killings, after another Protestant militia, the Loyalist Volunteer Force (LVF) — responsible for most of the murders — said it would continue its attacks on Catholics.

"Reports that the LVF may call off its campaign of violence is total and utter rubbish," the renegade paramilitary group said in a statement issued in Belfast using a recognised code-word.

The LVF, formed in 1996 in opposition to a ceasefire by the main Protestant militias, has stepped up attacks on Catholics since Dec. 27 when its leader Billy Wright was shot in prison by extreme republicans.

The statement came amid mounting speculation that the LVF was behind the failed murder attempt on a taxi office employee in north Belfast, early Tuesday.

Meanwhile, Britain's Northern Ireland Security Minister Adam Ingram underlined the determination of the two governments to advance the peace process, which aims to end nearly 30 years of conflict that has claimed more than 3,200 lives.

"It is important that everyone realises what the potential is of achieving a peaceful settlement," he said.

London and Dublin have set a May deadline for a solution.

With their latest initiative, the Irish and British governments will be walking a tightrope between Catholic republicans, who want a united Ireland, and

Protestant unionists, who want to keep British rule in Ulster.

The Irish Republican Army (IRA), represented at the talks by its political wing Sinn Féin, last week rejected the original Anglo-Irish blueprint for the negotiations, claiming it was biased towards the Protestant community.

An Irish source claimed the new proposal would commit London and Dublin to the provisions contained in the 1995 Anglo-Irish framework document, which proposed that any new cross-border arrangement would have executive powers.

But this would be fiercely resisted by the largest

Protestant party, the Ulster Unionists, which has warned it might pull out of the talks if the plans for a North-South ministerial council are tilted too far towards the republicans.

The peace negotiations have been injected with a sense of urgency by the spate of sectarian murders in recent weeks.

Eight Catholics and two Protestants have been slain in Northern Ireland since December in attacks that have threatened to derail the talks on the future of the province.

Monday, the political wing of the Ulster Freedom Fighters (UFF) was forced out of the talks after the province's largest Protestant militia admitted having carried out some of the killings.

The Ulster Democratic Party (UDP) said it is confident of returning to the negotiating table by the end of next month — if the UFF respects the ceasefire it declared along with the mainstream Protestant militias in 1994.

But under a worst-case scenario, the absence of the UDP negotiators could trigger more violence by the UFF, bringing to an end the Protestant cessation of violence. This in turn could provoke the IRA to renege on its July 1997 ceasefire.

In order to participate in talks, participants have to agree to commit themselves to exclusively peaceful means.

The two governments have proposed a blueprint which envisages a more autonomous Northern Ireland still ultimately under British rule, after the negotiations failed to produce any real progress.

Jammed gun saves man's life in Northern Ireland

BELFAST (AFP) — A man in Belfast narrowly escaped being murdered in a suspected Protestant paramilitary attack early Tuesday when his attacker's firearm jammed, police in Northern Ireland said.

Investigators were not immediately able to give more details on the attempted shooting, which happened around 4:00 a.m. (0400 GMT) outside a taxi company office in north Belfast.

Although no group immediately said it was responsible, security sources said they suspected that the Loyalist Volunteer Force, a hardline Protestant armed faction which has carried out a number of revenge attacks for the prison murder of LVF leader Billy Wright by a republican group on Dec. 27, had carried out the attack.

Eight Catholics and two Protestants have been slain in Northern Ireland since Dec. 27 in killings that have threatened to derail peace talks on the future of the British-run province.

Northern Ireland's police chief has said that at least three of the killings of Catholics have been carried out by the Ulster Freedom Fighters, and the UFF has admitted carrying out a "measured military response" to Wright's murder. Monday the UFF's political wing, the Ulster Democratic Party (UDP), quit the ongoing peace talks under pressure from the other participants and the British and Irish governments.

In order to participate in talks, participants have to agree to commit themselves to exclusively peaceful means.

German Catholic Church bows to Pope's request on abortion

MAINZ, Germany (AFP) — Roman Catholic bishops in Germany said Tuesday that they had bowed to a request by the Pope to stop church-run counselling centres issuing certificates to women seeking abortions.

But, after a two-day conference devoted to the question, the bishops said in a joint communiqué that Catholics would continue to work in abortion counselling centres.

The conference chairman, Bishop Karl Lehmann, said in the western city of Mainz: "We will honour (the Pope's) wish," but he added that the change in Catholic activity in the centres would not be until next year.

Abortion is illegal in Germany, but in the first 12 weeks of pregnancy it can be carried out if a woman has a certificate showing that she has visited a counselling centre. The certificate is not itself an authorisation to abort, but is the necessary proof that a woman has first sought counselling.

Pope John Paul II sent an apostolic letter last week to German bishops asking them to change what had been their generally

favourable attitude towards letting Catholics work in the centres.

The Pope feels certification is in effect aiding abortion.

In his letter, made public by the bishops Tuesday, the Pope said: "I want to ask you urgently, dear brothers, to find a way so that certificates of this kind are no longer delivered in Catholic centres or those supervised by the church."

But he also said: "I entreat you ... that the church remain present in an important way in advising women seeking help."

"I ask you to find a new way for church counselling by making sure that the freedom of the church is not compromised and that the institutions of the Catholic Church do not share responsibility in the death of innocent children," the pope said.

He said he supported the bishops in their desire to remain in the counselling centres "to save from murder many unborn children and to remain at the side of women with all the means you have."

The Church is responsible for some 260 centres, out of

more than 1,600 in the country as a whole. According to the Catholic welfare agency Caritas, 20,117 women sought advice on abortion from the centres in 1996, and 23 per cent ended up deciding to keep their babies.

Activist priests, lay Catholic groups and leaders from across the political spectrum had called on the bishops to reject the pope's call.

The bishops conference that met in a monastery near the southern city of Würzburg Sunday and Monday said Tuesday that it would set up a working group "to find new ways to answer the concerns of the pope and of our people."

"We will set up a new system in our counselling centres," the bishops said, adding that they would be looking for a way to "continue good counselling without delivering a certificate."

Mr. Lehmann said the changeover would not take place however until next year and that the church would continue issuing certificates this year. He gave next Jan. 1 as the date for the change.

Taleban free captured fighters in Eid amnesty

KABUL (AFP) — Afghanistan's Taleban militia have freed 75 opposition prisoners as part of an amnesty marking the coming Eid holidays, state-run radio Shariat announced Tuesday.

"Under a special decree of the leader of the faithful (Taleban leader Mullah Mohammad Omar) and in honour of Eid Al Fitr, 75 prisoners were released from Kandahar prison," the report said.

"Among the released prisoners were 40 from Ahmad Shah Masood's group, 20 from Abdul Rashid Dostam

and the rest from Hezb-i-Wahdat," it added.

Monday the Taleban mouthpiece announced the freeing of 112 prisoners held in the capital Kabul in honour of Eid Al Fitr, which marks the end of the holy month of Ramadan. The prisoners had been held in a prison re-commissioned to detain suspected opponents of the militia's 16-month-old rule.

The releases also come following a series of similar unconditional gestures by opposition forces late last year, in which over 200 Taleban captives were freed.

According to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) rival warring factions hold at least 5,600 prisoners.

An ICRC spokesman here said the organisation had registered 1,541 detainees held by northern-based opposition forces, and 4,070 prisoners held by the Taleban, who hold the southern two-thirds of the country.

But many more prisoners are held in private jails operated by individual commanders from both sides which remain unregistered and unchecked by the ICRC.

Mentally ill Scots could be forced to undergo brain surgery

LONDON (AFP) — Certain categories of the mentally ill in Scotland could be forced to undergo brain surgery, after the government approved a controversial commission's recommendation, a spokesman said Monday.

The corrective surgery can currently only take place with the patients' consent but doctors said that some of those suffering from manic depression and obsessive disorders were not in a condition to provide that consent.

A government health commission proposed recently that certain patients should be given the surgery even if they had not given approval, if their condition rendered them incapable to decide on it for themselves.

The proposal was approved by the Scottish junior health minister, Sam Galbraith. The system would be tried out in Scotland before being spread to England and Wales, according to a government spokesman.

Scotland's health system is run separately from that in the rest of the country.



Chairman of the Peace Talks American Senator George Mitchell arrives for the second day of talks. The talks have been thrown into crisis following the recent spate of sectarian killings in the province and the withdrawal of the Ulster Democratic Party (Reuters photo)

Inquiry into origins of 'mad cow' disease opens in London

LONDON (AFP) — An inquiry into "mad cow" disease, which has claimed 22 lives in Britain and led to a worldwide ban on British beef exports, opened in London Tuesday.

The inquiry will have powers to call present and former government ministers to give evidence.

Inquiry chairman Lord Justice Nicholas Phillips, an appeal court judge, will then draw up his conclusions with his panel — a professor of pathology and a former senior government official — and submit them to the government.

Mr. Phillips said Tuesday he had been assured no government officials would be disciplined for "spilling the beans."

"The inquiry wishes to understand the facts, establish whether the action taken was adequate and see what lessons can be learned," he said.

The process will be closely followed by lawyers of relatives of those who have died after contracting the human version of the disease to inform any later claim for compensation, either from the beef industry or the government.

But David Body, a lawyer for relatives of Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (CJD) victims, said Tuesday that "the most important aspect of this from the point of view of my clients is that they have some means to come to terms with their loss."

"Fact-finding comes first," he said. "What the conclusions reflect or where that may lead us is entirely different."

The Labour government announced the public inquiry last month. Agriculture Secretary Jack Cunningham called the issue "a disaster" for Britain.

The previous Conservative administration steadfastly refused demands for an inquiry despite signs of a link between "mad cow" disease, or bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), to a new incurable and fatal strain of CJD.

Before the probable link was announced in March 1996, London consistently said there was no proof that the disease could be passed to humans through infected beef.

In one notorious incident, a Conservative agriculture minister held a photo opportunity feeding a beef burger to his

young daughter while declaring that British beef was safe.

But 10 years after BSE was first discovered, London announced that the new variant of CJD was "probably" contracted by eating infected beef.

A worldwide ban on British beef exports by the European Commission swiftly followed as well as a collapse in domestic beef demand, sending the beef industry into rapid decline.

In order to have the ban lifted, the government has undertaken a programme of mass slaughter of cattle thought to be at risk of BSE and is attempting to set up a computerised record of all cattle.

Since 1988, 170,000 cattle confirmed as having BSE have been killed. In addition two million animals aged over 30 months — thought to be more at risk of BSE — have been killed as well as 60,000 other animals under a "selective" cull of herds thought to be most at risk.

The number of BSE cases detected in British herds has fallen dramatically in recent years, from 36,682 in 1993 to 374 in 1997.

The fall in BSE rates and falling farm incomes has prompted farmers to become increasingly militant in their insistence for government support.

Their anger was fuelled by an announcement before Christmas that the government was banning the sale of beef on the bone, such as T-bone steaks, because of new evidence that CJD might be contracted from bone marrow.

Earlier this month the European Commission proposed that Northern Ireland be allowed to resume exports of deboned beef from cattle aged between six and 30 months and from herds certified as having no BSE for the last eight years.

The proposal reflects the fact that the province's mainly grass-fed cattle have been far less affected by BSE than mainland Britain, which in the past were fed on feed made of rendered cattle and sheep carcasses, and that Northern Ireland has had a computerised cattle tracing system since 1988.

The British beef industry was worth 2.4 billion pounds (\$4 billion) before the BSE crisis began in 1995.

MI5 link over job for Cook's lover denied

LONDON (AFP) — Allegations that British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook decided against appointing his mistress Gaynor Regan as his ministry secretary after their affair was discovered by MI5 agents were denied by his spokesman Monday.

The spokesman insisted that the suggestion that he and Ms. Regan feared her candidature would not survive positive vetting procedures because of the affair was "completely untrue".

The accusation that MI5 prompted the decision by uncovering the affair was reportedly levelled by senior Conservative sources.

Mr. Cook's spokesman earlier confirmed that he and Ms. Regan did consider her taking up the post, but decided between them against it.

The relationship between Mr. Cook and Ms. Regan did not come to light publicly until August, three months after the issue arose of who should fill the post of diary secretary then held by Anne Bullen.

The spokesman said Ms. Regan's appointment had not been blocked, nor had Ms. Bullen been sacked to make way for her to take the job.

The clarification — which the Foreign Office declined to expand Monday — came after leading Conservatives expressed

anger at Ms. Bullen's departure and vowed to ask questions in parliament about Ms. Regan's part in her quitting.

Ms. Bullen, 56, quoted in Tuesday's edition of The Mirror newspaper, told a friend that she was kicked out of her job to make way for Ms. Regan and that Mr. Cook was "obsessed with his lover."

Ms. Bullen was a personal appointment by Conservative former Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd in November 1993.

Mr. Cook's spokesman insisted: "The decision not to renew her contract was taken three weeks after the (May 1 general) election when it became apparent that she was unwilling to develop a reasonable working relationship with the new government."

The spokesman stressed: "She was not moved to make room for anyone else."

But he conceded: "After the decision was taken to replace Ms. Bullen, Gaynor Regan was, for a short time, considered for the post. But, having considered the possibility, both she and Mr. Cook decided not to pursue it. Any suggestion that her appointment was blocked by a third party is completely untrue."

A career civil servant was eventually recruited for the job.

Khmer Rouge launch new appeal to Cambodia's impoverished peasants

BANGKOK (AFP) — The Khmer Rouge guerrilla faction Tuesday launched a fresh appeal to their traditional support base, the Cambodia's impoverished peasantry, to "energetically fight" against strongman Hun Sen's government in Phnom Penh.

The call to arms came in a clandestine Khmer Rouge radio broadcast containing two recent speeches given at the guerrillas' stronghold of Anlong Veng in northern Cambodia by military chief Ta Mok and political leader Khieu Samphan, the prime minister of their provisional government.

The Anlong Veng patriots have a very important duty and particular responsibility regarding the real lives of poor peasants," Ta Mok said, according to the radio which identified him by one of his aliases, Chhit Choeun.

"It is the poor peasants who have protected the nation and all the Khmer people and also allowed Cambodia's survival," he said in a speech whose tone and content were reminiscent of those during the Khmer Rouge's disastrous experiment with radical agrarian Communism in the 1970s.

For his part, Khieu Samphan saluted the "heroic efforts" of the Cambodian peasantry in "energetically fighting against the forces of the Communist Vietnamese and their puppet Hun Sen."

The rapidly anti-Vietnamese Khmer Rouge were toppled in 1979 by Hanoi's invading army and consistently refer to the country and to Hun Sen, Cambodia's powerful second prime minister, in vitriolic and pejorative terms.

The speeches of the two leaders came at a recent ceremony in Anlong Veng to commemorate the "glorious victory" of anti-Phnom Penh resistance forces at O Smach, a hamlet on the Thai border that has been besieged by Hun Sen's troops for several months.

Fighting between government forces and those loyal to deposed co-premier Prince Norodom Ranariddh, including the Khmer Rouge, has been ongoing around O Smach since the prince was effectively ousted by Hun Sen in July.

O Smach, the military headquarters of the prince's resistance movement is being defended by royalist troops as well as Khmer Rouge guerrillas.

Sri Lankan troops donate wages to rebuild bombed temple

COLOMBO (AFP) — The Sri Lankan army decided to donate one day's pay from all its staff towards the restoration of the country's holiest Buddhist shrine bombed by Tamil Tiger guerrillas, the military said Tuesday.

All ranks in the army readily agreed to donate the money as a token gesture, military spokesman Sarath Munasinghe said, adding the contribution amounted to 18 million rupees (\$300,000).

Restoration work at the 16th century Temple of the Tooth began Monday when 3,000 builders were deployed assisted by army

soldiers tasked with clearing the rubble left by Sunday's suicide bombing.

The separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) guerrillas drove a truck packed with explosives to the site and detonated it in front of the temple, killing three of their own men and 10 pilgrims.

Government forces are currently engaged in their biggest ground offensive against the LTTE in the north of the country. More than 55,000 people have been killed in the separatist campaign led by the LTTE in the past 25 years.

Absentee Spice Girls dominate American Music Awards

LOS ANGELES (R) — The Spice Girls made a clean sweep of the 25th annual American Music Awards Monday, winning in all three of their categories, and leading the long list of key artists who did not attend the ceremony.

The British pop sensations were rehearsing for their world tour in Dublin and sent in a pre-recorded video message. They won for favourite band, favourite album Spice and favourite new artist in the pop/rock category. Not so lucky were fellow no-shows, the Wallflowers, who went head-to-head with the Spice Girls in those three areas.

Other winners who did not turn up included Frank Sinatra, who received the noncompetitive Award of Merit, Celine Dion, Elton John, Mariah Carey and British rockers Bush.

One artist who did turn up was the unluckiest man of the evening, Puff Daddy, the stage name of rap impresario Sean "Puffy" Combs, had led the field with five nominations, but went home empty-handed.

Combs magnanimously went backstage to tell reporters that he was philosophical about the shut-out.

"I'm just grateful to be here... I've got so much to be thankful for," he said.

He even read the acceptance speech he had prepared, in which he thanked his mother, girlfriend, label boss Clive Davis, and most notably his friend the late rapper, notorious B.I.G., to whom he would have dedicated an award.

Besides the Spice Girls, the other multiple winners were Babyface and George Strait, with two trophies each. Babyface, the stage name of singer-producer Kenneth Edmonds, won favourite male artist in both the pop/rock and soul/RB categories. Strait won favourite male artist and favourite album "Carrying Your Love With Me" in the country category.

Upon accepting his first award to a standing ovation, a surprised Babyface said at the podium that he would be

"remiss" if he did not acknowledge Combs: "I love you, I really do... he's my guy."

The second time he went up, Babyface took Combs in a lengthy embrace.

Among the other absentee award-winners, Celine Dion was favourite female artist in the pop/rock category, and Mariah Carey in the soul/RB category. Elton John won for favourite adult contemporary artist. Bush won for favourite alternative music artist.

Winners who were present included Erykah Badu, who was favourite new artist in the soul/RB category, and Lee Ann Womack, who won the award in the country category.

Julio Iglesias won the inaugural favourite Latin artist award, beating his heartthrob son, Enrique, and Luis Miguel. Iglesias said backstage that it was only natural for him to win the first award because "I'm the best one, darling."

Asked how he would celebrate, Iglesias said: "I will make love with my first wife."

Perhaps the emotional highlight of the evening was Nancy Sinatra's acceptance of the award of merit on behalf of father Frank, whom she told the audience was "the coolest guy on the face of the planet...."

Struggling to hold back tears, she continued: "I am so proud to be your daughter and am so happy to accept this wonderful award for you."

Backstage, Sinatra said her 82-year-old father was "doing well, health-wise, and would be watching the show on television."

The ceremony took place at the Shrine Auditorium, with comedian Drew Carey hosting. Performers included Puff Daddy, Garth Brooks, Janet Jackson and Matchbox 20.

Winners of the American Music Awards are determined by a poll of about 20,000 members of the public who are chosen on the basis of geographic location, age, sex and race. Nominees are based on sales and radio airplay data.



Japanese Finance Minister Hiroshi Mitsuzuka faces reporters as he speaks at a midnight news conference at his Tokyo ministry, following the arrest of two officials of the powerful ministry on suspicion of accepting bribes (Reuters photo)

Japan's finance minister defies mounting calls to quit over scandal

TOKYO (AFP) — Japanese Finance Minister Hiroshi Mitsuzuka defied mounting pressure to resign Tuesday as a widening bribery scandal dragged his powerful ministry through the mud.

Japan's main opposition group vowed to boycott parliament unless he quit and even members of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and its allies joined the chorus after prosecutors raided the finance ministry.

The raid led to the arrest Monday of two officials for allegedly accepting bribes from banks in return for tip-offs and lenient inspections, the first such strike against the ministry in 50 years.

The scandal has led to salacious press articles detailing the bureaucrats' requests for banks to take them to sex clubs, including a restaurant specialising in waitresses who do not wear panties.

Asked whether he intended to step down, Mr. Mitsuzuka told reporters: "My responsibility is not to let these incidents happen again and to implement a reorganisation of the ministry."

Mr. Mitsuzuka, who leads a powerful faction within the LDP, said finance ministry inspectors would "respond in a determined manner to the outcome" of in-house investigations into the alleged bribery scandal.

But Masakuni Murakami, the leader of the ruling party LDP's members in the Upper House, told a news conference that the "responsibility (of the minister for the scandal) and the question of resignation are inseparable."

LDP Secretary General Koichi Kato said: "This is a serious political problem."

Takako Doi, head of the Social Democratic Party, the LDP's parliamentary ally, was more blunt: "There is no question that he should resign."

Minyuren, the largest opposition group, called in an emergency meeting for Mr. Mitsuzuka's resignation, promising to move a no-confidence motion and to boycott parliament unless he quit, officials said.

"Finance Minister Mitsuzuka's management responsibility is grave," said an official of the parliamentary alliance, formed in early January by six opposition parties to challenge the LDP.

Kiyoshi Kimura, chief economist at Société Générale Securities, said

if he were to resign "the market will probably rise — Mr. Mitsuzuka is very unpopular in the market because he has no sense on financial matters."

Prosecutors Monday arrested 53-year-old Koichi Miyagawa, the head of a unit within the ministry's financial inspection department and another senior inspector, 49-year-old Toshimi Taniuchi.

Mr. Miyagawa was suspected of accepting entertainment from Asahi Bank and Dai-ichi Kangyo banks worth 2.6 million yen (\$20,000) between 1994 and last year.

He also enjoyed a 4.4 million yen discount from an affiliate of Asahi Bank when he bought an apartment in July last year, Jiji Press said.

Daily newspapers said Mr. Miyagawa asked Dai-ichi Kangyo Bank in 1994 to take him to a special members-only "shabu shabu" boiled beef restaurant with "no panties" waitresses.

"I definitely want to take a look," the 53-year-old bureaucrat told the bank in reference to the so-called "no-pan shabu shabu," according to the newspapers Nihon Keizai Shimbun and Tokyo Shimbun.

The Asahi Shimbun said 1,200 bank officials reportedly were members of "no-pan shabu shabu," which are reputedly equipped with Marilyn Monroe-style wind fans set in the floor.

Mr. Taniuchi was allegedly wine and dined to the tune of 2.2 million yen by Sanwa Bank and Hokkaido Takushoku Bank between 1993 and 1997. Newspapers said he asked for treats at sex clubs, golf courses, spa resorts and restaurants.

The finance ministry has launched an in-house investigation of up to 500 officials, Jiji Press said, to check whether they had accepted excessive entertainment from financial institutions.

Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto ordered cabinet ministers Tuesday to consider fresh legislation to back up the code of ethics governing bureaucrats.

The last raid on the finance ministry was in 1948 when the then head of the budget bureau, Takeo Fukuda, was arrested for taking bribes from chemical company Showa Denko Ltd.

He was found not guilty and went on to become prime minister in the 1970s.

Clinton strongly denies having sex with aide

WASHINGTON (AFP) — President Bill Clinton forcefully denied having sex with a young White House aide, as allegations about a possible witness to their affair were withdrawn by a Texas daily.

The rapidly evolving scandal threatened to overshadow Mr. Clinton's State of the Union address before Congress late Tuesday and is raising concerns about Mr. Clinton's ability to handle delicate foreign policy issues.

Flanked by his wife, Hillary, and Vice President Al Gore, Mr. Clinton used an education event at the White House Monday to confront allegations he had sex with Monica Lewinsky, who first worked at the White House in 1995 at the age of 21, and that he encouraged her to lie about it under oath.

"I want to say one thing to the American people. I want you to listen to me," Mr. Clinton said, wagging his finger and speaking in an angry tone which contrasted with last week's more tempered denials.

"I am going to say this again. I did not have sexual relations with that woman," he said, referring to Ms. Lewinsky.

"I never told anybody to lie, not a single time, never. These allegations are false and I need to go back to work for the American people," Mr. Clinton added.

Last week, Mr. Clinton denied the affair in several

interviews, but his failure to answer specific questions and his oddly-worded denials left the press demanding another response.

Hours after Mr. Clinton's new denial, The Dallas Morning News in its early Tuesday edition reported that a Secret Service agent had agreed to testify that he saw the president and Ms. Lewinsky in a compromising situation.

The report, quoting an unidentified lawyer familiar with negotiations between the alleged witness and the investigation spearheaded by independent counsel Kenneth Starr, caused a sensation.

Mr. Clinton's personal attorney David Kendall issued a quick statement dismissing the report as "false and malicious" and "another political leak, for obvious reasons on the eve of the State of the Union" address. A few hours later, the Texas daily withdrew its front-page report and issued a statement on its Internet website saying that "the information provided for that report was inaccurate."

Also late Monday, Ms. Lewinsky's lawyer said he had provided Mr. Starr a written account of what Ms. Lewinsky would likely say about the allegations.

"We are now in the position where the ball is totally in ... Starr's court," William Ginsburg told reporters.

The statement is Ms. Lewinsky's attempt to receive

immunity from prosecution from Mr. Starr, since she could be prosecuted if it turns out she lied in a sworn statement earlier this month in which she denied having an affair with Mr. Clinton.

Ms. Lewinsky was subpoenaed to appear Tuesday before a federal grand jury, but some attorneys told The Dallas Morning News that the hearing could be postponed. Another source said Mr. Starr was "very mindful of the potential embarrassment or distraction" to Mr. Clinton's speech before Congress.

The White House spent the weekend working on its defence strategy, rejecting calls for Mr. Clinton to mention the scandal in the State of the Union address.

Within minutes of Mr. Clinton's denial Monday, Wall Street stock prices shot up — the Dow Jones index picked up more than 52 points — and the dollar quickly gained ground, climbing to 1.7845 German marks from 1.6823 before he spoke.

More serious than the allegation that Mr. Clinton had sex with Ms. Lewinsky is the charge he asked the former White House intern to lie about their involvement to lawyers handling Paula Jones' sexual harassment suit against the president.

Mrs. Jones has charged Mr. Clinton with propositioning her in 1991 when he was Arkansas

governor and she was a state employee. Her attorneys are attempting to establish a pattern of sexual misconduct by Mr. Clinton.

If confirmed, the cover-up charge could lead to a congressional attempt to impeach Mr. Clinton.

Ms. Lewinsky denied the affair Jan. 7 in sworn testimony for the Jones case — as did Mr. Clinton — but she was secretly taped talking about the alleged affair and cover-up efforts to a co-worker.

The Jones trial is scheduled for May 27, but Mr. Clinton's attorney asked Monday that the trial be brought forward, complaining that the suit compounded with the media frenzy over Ms. Lewinsky has hampered the president.

"Normal journalistic restraint has been abandoned by the broadcast media in their competition to be first on the air with titillating allegations," Robert Bennett wrote in his request to the court.

By trying to move up the trial, Mr. Bennett has also sent out a signal that Mr. Clinton wants his name cleared as soon as possible.

Meanwhile, opinion polls indicate that most Americans are unconcerned about Mr. Clinton's sexual dalliances but consider the possible cover-up grounds for impeachment.

Major drug companies investigating epidemic of fake medications

NEW YORK (AP) — The world's 20 largest drug companies have formed a secret task force to investigate the distribution of fake medicines to thousands of people in poor countries, according to "60 Minutes."

The CBS newsmagazine also reports that the number two official at the World Health Organisation admits falsifying his own credentials and lying about being a doctor.

People are dying throughout the world because of drugs that do not work and are being sold by unscrupulous producers, according to an advance transcript of the report.

Among the frauds cited was an inactive meningitis vaccine given to 60,000 people in Niger. "Many hundreds" later contracted the disease and either died or suffered permanent brain damage, "60 Minutes" said.

"60 Minutes" said the world's 20 biggest drug companies, which it did not name, have set up a secret task force called the Pharmaceutical Security Institute to investigate the distribution of fake medications.

Dr. Harvey Bale, who heads the institute, said in a letter to "60 Minutes" that he believes United States drug supplies are safe, but has evidence of a pharmaceutical underworld that

preys on patients in developing countries.

The Geneva-based WHO may have made the problem worse by publishing a guide to inexpensive medications without checking their quality and safety, the report said.

The show also reported that the United Nations agency's second-ranking official lied about his credentials.



Singer Mary J. Blige poses with the American Music Award she won as favourite female soul/rhythm and blues artist at the 25th annual American Music Awards at the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles (Reuters photo)

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Justice above politics

MONDAY'S HIGH Court of Justice's decision declaring the temporary Press and Publications Law unconstitutional is indeed a milestone in the Jordanian judicial development. It is historic on two counts: first, by adopting such a ruling the court expanded its judicial function to include legal pronouncements on the constitutionality of legislations; secondly it showed the court's willingness to confront the government on a highly controversial issue that had put the Executive Branch at loggerheads with the Fourth Estate.

Judicial expansion bodes well for the Kingdom and its quest for a new and progressive profile on operational democracy. A dynamic and effective judiciary has often been accredited with responsibility for the advancement and consolidation of pluralistic democracy, the rule of law and the respect for human rights in developed countries. Without, for example, the historic decision by the U.S. Supreme Court to reverse the attempt by the U.S. government to prevent the publication by the New York Times of the so-called "Pentagon Papers" on the Vietnam conflict in the early seventies, freedom of the press in the most important democracy in the world would never have attained its current level. Likewise, sans the U.S. Supreme Court ruling on racial equality — declaring that equal, but separate, schooling is unconstitutional — or its ruling in favour of proportional representation, the level of democracy in that country would have remained below expectations. The same applies to other democracies with constitutional courts.

In Jordan, we have noted time and again how the highest courts of the land are increasingly expanding their mandate in a bid to act with jurisdiction to pass rulings on constitutional issues. A case in point is last year's ruling by the High Court that the extradition treaty with the U.S. was unconstitutional because it had not been considered and adopted by Parliament.

There is no question in our mind that with Monday's ruling the temporary law is now null and void. There is no other sound legal interpretation of the verdict. However, given the limited reasoning of the court in this instance, which centres on the violation of Article 94 of the Constitution, it stands to reason that, from a strictly legal point of view, the government can remedy the situation by reintroducing the law once again to Parliament for consideration and possible adoption, even though this is not democratic. Nevertheless, until Parliament acts on it, all state actions based on the temporary law must also be viewed as obsolete.

In hindsight, some of us would have liked the High Court to have gone further by additionally addressing constitutional features on the freedom of the press. Had that been done, we would not today be worried about any new government attempt to restore the restrictive measures of May 1997.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Arab Al Yawm's Khaled Zubeidi said Jordan's industry and the economy at large are facing a serious challenge in the Iraqi markets from Syria as well as Turkey and Iran. Disregarding their political differences with the Baghdad regime, the Syrians have opened the door for their high quality goods to invade the Iraqi markets at competitive prices, noted the writer. He said before the Syrians, the Turks and the Iranians did the same with the result that one can see a flood of these countries' goods in Iraqi markets because these countries are not restricted by the U.N. Sanctions Committee and do not adhere to the sanctions rules like Jordan. The Jordanian exporters and industrialists, said the writer, have been complaining from the competition their products are facing in Iraq especially as Syria, for instance, is selling similar goods at lower prices, said the writer. He said that although the Iraqis prefer to buy Jordanian goods, the Jordanian authorities are not allowing this to happen in view of the many restrictions they impose on exports to Iraq and their strict adherence to the U.N. sanctions committee's rules. The writer said that unless something is done to address the situation Jordan's economy will be dealt a very serious blow especially as a major part of Jordan's exports depend on the Iraqi markets.

Al Dustour's Yasser Zaareh addressed the failure of the Washington meetings involving the U.S. president, the Israeli prime minister and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat saying that the Palestinians now stand no chance of ensuring their legitimate rights without real assistance from the Arab World. The writer said the talks proved that Washington is not interested in pursuing the role of fair peace broker and not concerned at all with exerting pressure on the Israelis to force them to comply with the peace requirements. He said that the PNA has promised to come up with an appropriate response to Netanyahu's intransigent stand but this can by no means come about if the Palestinians are not fully backed by the Arab countries altogether. The writer said the Arab and Muslim countries are duty bound to come to the help of the Palestinians whether they will return to the intifada or seek other solutions for the problem.

Washington Watch

A difficult and disturbing week

By Dr. James Zogby

IT WAS a difficult and disturbing week. What was promoted as a week of meetings crucial to the future of the Middle East peace process turned instead into a series of sideshows.

Two major stories dominated the week's news. First was the on again, off-again, then on-again invitation to Palestinian President Yasser Arafat to visit the Holocaust Museum. This was followed by the U.S. press' feeding frenzy over President Clinton's alleged affair with a 24 year-old former White House intern. Equally disturbing was the disgusting level to which the allies of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government have lowered the political discourse about Arabs and Middle East issues. This city has not witnessed such an outpouring of hate-filled diatribes in many years.

Ignored during all of this, were some subtle but still undeniable indications of change which, although not the focus of significant press and political attention, should not be overlooked. The week opened with Netanyahu's arrival and the announcement that the Holocaust Memorial and Museum had withdrawn an invitation to President Arafat to visit the museum and pay respect to the victims of the Holocaust.

Netanyahu's arrival was peculiar for an Israeli leader. The Jewish community turned out for a respectful but very low-key welcome. It was clear from several newspaper advertisements sponsored by pro-peace Jewish organizations that the prime minister is losing some support among the traditionally sympathetic Jewish community. Although they attempted to present a good public face, signs of tension were obvious.

The more rousing welcome occurred after the mainstream Jewish groups left the scene. When Netanyahu arrived at his hotel — the United States did not offer him an official Blair House welcome — he was greeted by a raucous demonstration hosted by "The National Unity Coalition for Israel" (NUCFI). The NUCFI is a group of fundamentalist Christian, right wing conservative and Orthodox Jewish organizations that strongly support Likud policies.

The podium featured the likes of Rev. Jerry Falwell and Rev. Pat Robertson, two anti-Arab, (anti-Muslim) fundamentalists, and several right wing politicians. Those in the audience frequently chanted "not one inch," as a way of showing support for Israel's hardline settler movement. If Netanyahu's intention was to mobilise his conservative allies against the president, this tactic both worked, and at the same time, backfired. Both President Clinton and Vice President Gore were furious and privately rebuked the Israeli leader. As well, many prominent mainstream Jewish leaders publicly criticised Netanyahu's poor judgement and his bad choice of allies.

Paralleling these events was the breaking story of the Holocaust museum cancelling its invitation to the Palestinian president. While right wingers celebrated the news, most Jewish leaders expressed shock and embarrassment at the insult. A number threatened to resign from

the museum's board of directors and called Arab Americans to apologise for the insult. The story continued for at least four days with the museum's decision looking worse each day, and the Palestinian president's gesture of goodwill looking more noble and gracious. In the end, the museum was forced to change its decision, apologise and reinstate the president. Since it was then too late by then to be added to Arafat's schedule, he declined the invitation but reaffirmed the sincerity of his gesture.

As disturbing as these events were, the bigoted rhetoric that accompanied them was even more distressing. Right wing members of Congress wrote letters and made public statements praising Netanyahu, reviling Arafat and threatening and condemning President Clinton for his pressure on the Israeli prime minister.

In newspaper articles and paid advertisements, on television and radio programmes, right wing commentators and fundamentalist leaders used extraordinarily harsh language that was insulting to all Arabs. Arafat was called "a murderer" and "Hitler-like." The pro-Likud Zionist Organisation of America described Arafat as a "wretched little murderer, torturer and persecutor...." One editor of a conservative newspaper wrote that "Arafat hardly needs to go to the Holocaust Museum to learn how to kill Jews." Another wrote that if President Clinton persisted in putting pressure on Netanyahu to return land to the Palestinians, he would be responsible for the "bloodthirsty murder of Jews" that would follow such an act.

Fundamentalist Christian commentator Cal Thomas said on television that just because Arabs "have one head, two eyes and some of them speak English" is not reason enough to believe that they "have the same moral structure as the rest of us." He concluded by calling Arafat "one of the most evil men on the world's stage today."

What was tragically ironic was that while Prime Minister Netanyahu was in the White House complaining to the U.S. president about the harsh attacks against Israel coming from the Arab press, his strongest U.S. supporters were engaging in an unprecedented bigoted attack against Arabs in the U.S. media.

The substance of the talks were overshadowed somewhat by these antics. It became clear, however, by week's end, that serious gaps remained between the Israeli and Palestinian positions.

President Clinton called me on Thursday night to review the process and the meetings. Without going into the details of the conversation, the president indicated that he was generally pleased with President Arafat's movement on both the security issue and the matter of the Palestinian covenant. The areas where real work remained to be done are now in Israel's corner — specifically, redeployment and the settlement "time out." The president and secretary of state will apparently be giving a short period of time for detailed responses on these issues. In addition, it is believed that if there is no resolution, the United States will come forward with a public statement spelling out its own positions.

One bright spot for the Palestinians was the reception they were given by the president and the rest of the U.S. government. In his opening public remarks to President Arafat, for example, President Clinton referred to him as "our partner for peace," a term he has used in the past to describe Prime Ministers Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres and President Arafat and a term he did not use to describe Prime Minister Netanyahu.

President Clinton also ratcheted up the language used to describe Palestinian rights when he described one of the underlying principles of the peace process as the realisation of Palestinian "aspirations to live as a free people" — a phrase that caught the attention of both the major U.S. press and the Palestinian delegation.

The wild press rampage over the president's alleged affair with a former White House intern has now, of course, overshadowed all of this. As is usually the case with such a "feeding frenzy" — not unlike sharks madly attacking meat in the water — that story grows in detail and speculation each day. It is not yet clear whether or how it will end. What is clear is that it could not have occurred at a more critical time for Middle East peace. It is distracting to the White House, it is distracting to the press, and it will most certainly render the president less able to focus on critical issues. The fear is that this may further embolden Prime Minister Netanyahu to resist U.S. pressure. Through it all, however, the White House and State Department Middle East teams will continue to focus on their work — but how effective they will be during this remains to be seen.

Should the administration decide to use pressure as a tool, it appears they would have the support of the U.S. public.

A poll conducted at the beginning of the week for the Arab American Institute by Zogby International found strong support in U.S. public opinion for administration pressure on Israel. The AAI poll showed that the U.S. public holds Israel and the Palestinians equally to blame for the impasse in the peace process and gives the president an open hand to use balanced pressure to force compliance to the peace accords. When asked what the president should do if Netanyahu fails to honour commitments, 26.5 per cent say the U.S. president should use diplomatic pressure, and 38 per cent say he should withhold U.S. aid to Israel — a total of almost two-thirds of all voters supporting some sanctions against Netanyahu's intransigence. And should Clinton use pressure almost 80 per cent of those with an opinion said they would support the president's action.

Most analysts believe that despite the current crisis, these poll numbers will hold up. Unless the presidency is destroyed by scandal, most Americans distinguished between a domestic crisis and maintaining U.S. credibility in a foreign area. The question, however, remains how grave will this domestic crisis become and how much will it weaken or distract the president. All in all, it was a difficult and disturbing week.

According to the board members

To the editor:

WITH REFERENCE to your article "Proposal to Regulate Work of Auditors Triggers Row Among Accountants" (Jordan Times, January 26), I would like to address the alleged violations of the Jordanian Association of Certified Public Accountants (JACPA) rules as claimed by Mr. Mohammad Al Bashir.

JACPA was included in a committee set up by the Financial Securities Commission (FSC) to propose regulations on accounting standards, auditing standards and qualifications of auditors of public shareholding companies listed on the Amman Securities Market. The committee was chaired by the Audit Bureau chairman, and included representatives from the Ministry of Industry and Trade, the Central Bank of Jordan, Mr. Naeem Khoury, Mr. Mohammad Saadeh, Mr. Samir Abu Lughod, Dr. Sadeq Al Husni and Dr. Naeem Dahmash. In addition, Mr. Mohammad Al Bashir, who is crying wolf now, was invited to become a member of the committee and attended its meetings.

A sub-committee was formed from the above and it delegated to JACPA the task of drafting the regulations. Mr. Bashir was also present. The proposed regulations were drafted by JACPA following the receipt of comments from public shareholding companies' auditors, and after researching current financial regulation regimes in the United Kingdom and the U.S.

JACPA's proposed regulations were then forwarded to the sub-committee, which duly made some amendments and additions. One of the amendments restricted the audit of public shareholding companies to category (A) auditors as defined in the Audit Profession Law. JACPA objected to this in writing and subsequently during a meeting with Dr. Michel Marto. I find it strange therefore that Mr. Bashir did not mention that this was not proposed by JACPA. It should be noted that category (A) auditors represent over 90 per cent of licensed auditors, and thus even if the regulations are

issued in their current form, they do not and cannot restrict the work to a few recognised auditing offices.

It is absolutely false that the proposals called for the reclassification of auditing offices and the announcement of a list of the first 10 among them. There is nothing in the proposals that calls for constructing a league of accounting firms. Your article is distorting an incident where JACPA was asked by the Ministry of Planning to provide a list of 10 accounting firms to facilitate the work of a World Bank entity to research the current status of financial reporting in Jordan. The supply of this list to the Ministry of Planning did not segregate auditors and did not lead to anyone gaining or losing out. Mr. Bashir is fully aware of this and I do not see how this fits

companies are reporting on companies worth hundreds of millions of dinars, and thus they should possess adequate experience to provide credibility to their reports to shareholders. In taking this position, JACPA is protecting the economy, the interests of the shareholders and also its members.

Having refuted the alleged allegations I will now list the changes JACPA proposed to protect auditors and improve financial reporting and the credibility of Jordan's financial market. Curiously Mr. Bashir chose not to inform the public of the following:

Quarterly reports should be accompanied by an auditor's review report. This should generate additional work for auditors and give more credibility to the interim reports.

the implementation of the company's policies, plan and decisions, and ensure optimum utilisation of the company's resources.

The board of directors should set up an audit committee made up of three non-executive directors to ensure their independence from the executive management. The audit committee is responsible for dealing with the auditors. This should increase the independence of the auditor and ensure the auditors' relationships with boards of directors are professional and objective.

The annual report should contain a statement by the directors about the ability of the company to continue as a going concern.

The above represent some of the salient regulations proposed by JACPA. There are many other provisions regarding accounting standards, the timing and quality of financial information which will also improve the quality of financial reporting. The ultimate decision on applying the proposals rests with the FSC.

To call the above proposals an "outrageous attack against auditors in the Kingdom and threaten our work" is outrageous. It is very obvious for any professional that these regulations will lead to a quantum leap in the standard of financial reporting and the auditing profession. Accordingly, the current campaign against the JACPA board is misguided and is driven by personal grievances by some members following the JACPA elections which were held in September 1997. It is a campaign which is driven through misinformation to make auditors feel threatened and that the current JACPA board is selling out to big accounting firms. This is completely unacceptable to me. I have been brought up to defend the weak and underprivileged, and as key contributors to the proposed regulations, I sought my colleagues' interests and national interests. Those insinuating otherwise, will be held accountable for their actions.

Bishr Ibrahim Baker
 JACPA Board Member
 Amman

LETTERS

with the FSC regulations.

The proposal that auditors should undergo 40 hours of training annually is actually a benefit to auditors, and I am just bewildered that this is construed to be detrimental to the profession. It actually falls short of the training requirement of governmental auditors, and international requirements in the U.K. and the U.S. In addition, JACPA is entrusted with this training and it is currently providing it free of charge to all its members. Therefore the training requirement does not favour the big accounting firms, which have their resources and training courses. It is the small size auditor who will benefit from this and enables him to compete on a level field with the big firms.

JACPA proposed that auditors of public shareholding companies should have five years experience, which Mr. Bashir is objecting to. In the U.K., and after passing the rigorous Chartered Accountancy exams over a period of three working years, auditors have to gain another two years experience before obtaining a practising certificate. This is logical since auditors of public shareholding

If a new auditor was elected or if a change in auditor occurred during the year or his/her position became vacant, the company is required to notify the FSC within two weeks and indicate whether the auditor has declined the appointment and if so why; whether there is disagreement between the auditor and the company and whether the auditor has qualified his/her reports on the financial statements during the previous years. In addition the auditor should write and inform the FSC of his/her own reasons for the change.

An arbitration committee will be set up with representatives from JACPA to decide on issues or disagreements that may arise between FSC and auditors and parties regulated by FSC.

The annual report should include a statement of directors' responsibilities for the preparation of the company's financial statements. The annual report should include a statement by the directors that they are responsible for providing an effective internal control structure to safeguard the company's assets, ensure the accuracy of the accounting and reporting functions, ensure

Sugar Free

BY RAMZI E. KHOURY

Thank God for small miracles

YOU MIGHT call it supernatural, but the papers you are about to see flood the news-stands are not ghosts. They are the resurrected!

If once you are pronounced dead and then brought back to life is a greater miracle than birth. If you are unimpressed by what the High Court of Justice has manifested before your eyes, you must be an atheist!

So let's pray an executive or several of them are unable to undo the miracle, that would save us from having jumped the gun in revelling about the decision finding the temporary amendments to the Press and Publications Law unconstitutional.

Still, one must admit that we have yet to come a way since the John Zenger case established a precedent in 1734 in the American colonies, similar to what our High Court succeeded in doing two days ago.

Sure, the Zenger precedent (which established that criticism that is true is not libelous) was not set over a constitutional technicality, but the Jordanian precedent is nevertheless a precedent! For one thing, what is the quantitative potential of precedent American justice can achieve in this day and age in comparison to ours? The Jordanian public can remain highly impressed for a long time to come, while nothing would surprise the American nation anymore... little excites it.

At the rate we are going now, by the time our High Court of Justice starts ruling against government actions that infringe on people's rights to information, freedom of expression, the right of the majority to the 4th Circle, an American president's alleged sexcapades would not only be dear, but a non-issue altogether!

I dread what boredom will bring to the American society in the future! This is probably why people prefer to raise their children here, they want them to always be impressed!

Sugar free contest
 Solve this problem and win early elections!

IF GROUPS of people sue the government for enacting every other temporary law, when there was no war, catastrophe or internal strife as interpreted to be stipulated in Article 94 of the Constitution, and of course, win the lawsuit THEN:

a- How many Lower House deputies will be able to afford another election campaign in soon?

b- Will deputies, driven by generosity a few months back, be able to reverse the hefty mansaf bills charged by restaurants and caterers during the nullified elections?

c- Which will be considered null and void: Ra'fat and Fureh's trip to Israel as deputies or the speeches they made during their election campaigns?

d- Will the '98 state budget revert to draft, and if so, how many deputies will have the energy to repeat the speeches they made during the debate?

e- If the speeches are declared null and void, JTV viewers be compensated for psychological damage rendered or valuable time wasted?

f- If the passing of the budget is reversed and the government has to payback all monies allocated by the treasury, including salaries, would this penalty imposed on all affiliated to the government become a discouragement to seek public office?

g- If elections are called again, will the Islamists still boycott the next elections and if so what will their excuse be?

h- Will the NCP manage to compile a list of official party candidates, or will it just have to run elections stealth style?

i- What is the future like?

Answer these questions correctly and win the title: "Nostradamus"

Norway's ex-PM Brundtland, elected WHO director

OSLO (AFP) — The new director-general of the World Health Organisation (WHO), former Norwegian Premier Gro Harlem Brundtland, is an internationally-respected champion of poor countries and public health.

The 58-year-old Gro, as she is known in Norway where she is hugely popular after 10 years as premier, has the support of Europe and the United States for the post.

U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan has also said she would be "superb" as director.

Ms. Brundtland has made a name for herself on the international scene as a spokeswoman for the disadvantaged, for environmental causes and women's rights. She is strongly committed to improving public health on a global scale.

Like the other candidates she is a trained doctor, and holds a master's degree in public health. Her leadership qualities, combined with her political background and international contacts, have made her a top candidate for the job, say observers.

A powerhouse of energy, the tiny brunette with blazing blue eyes is known for her tireless work schedule and fighting spirit.

Ms. Brundtland has stressed that health issues should be addressed as an integral part of overall economic and social development, and has called for better coherence of national and international health efforts. In Geneva recently, she reiterated that "underdevelopment and poverty on a global scale are the main challenges" facing public health today.

Known for her iron will, the Norwegian is no stranger to controversy.

She is a strong supporter of the right to abortion, which has

led her into conflict with the Vatican, among others. By Ms. Brundtland does not for the issue it elected WHO director.

"I don't think it will be a problem. These questions have already been taken up at 12 conferences, and the results have been that I can accept her in a recent interview."

Gro entered politics at 24 at the age of 35 as environment minister in Norway's four government, a post she held for five years.

In February 1981, she made history by becoming the first woman prime minister in Scandinavia and Norway's youngest at age 41. She had to quit after only six months when a conservative minority government took power after a general election.

She served as prime minister in 1989, and a third time from 1990 to October 1996, when she resigned to take the helm to her party Thorbjørn Jagland.

In 1987, she was appointed chair of the U.N.'s World Commission on Environment and Development. This commission produced the so-called "Brundtland report" and led to the Earth Summit held in June 1992 in Rio de Janeiro.

In 1988, Brundtland's youngest of four children, Joergen, committed suicide, and she resigned as Labour Party leader remained premier.

During a WHO campaign, which has cost \$250,000, she travelled 12 of the 32 countries represented on the board, including controversial visit to violent-ridden Algeria in early 1997. "What appeals to me is the international perspective, the possibility to work across borders," she said.

Becoming WHO director will fulfil lifelong dream for Ms. Brundtland. Even during her years as prime minister, she noted that Norway was too small for a woman with such international aspirations.

Copenhagen Declaration revisited a year on

One year after the Copenhagen Declaration was signed, its members are still trying to find their way down the dark corridor to coexistence. Nevine Khalil of Egypt's Al Ahran weekly attempts to find out whether there is light at the end of the tunnel.

HOURS BEFORE Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu headed to Washington for talks with U.S. President Bill Clinton last week, he received a letter from the Israeli members of the International Alliance for Arab-Israeli Peace (IAAIP), urging him to press ahead with peace-making. "We call on you, to seek justice not only from your perspective but also from that of those present adversaries who should be your allies tomorrow," the letter stated. The letter criticised the "continuing humiliation and treatment of Palestinians and their leaders as second-class people," describing this as "a serious mistake of potentially devastating dimensions."

The letter was not the first that the Alliance of Egyptian, Israeli, Jordanian, Palestinian and European intellectuals, opinion-makers and former officials had sent to Netanyahu. Last February, in an open letter to Netanyahu, the IAAIP, which was created by the Copenhagen Declaration on January 31, 1997, expressed its "alarm over the Israeli government's decision to construct Jewish settlements in Arab East Jerusalem."

Since then, Netanyahu's government has pressed ahead with construction in Jabal Abu Ghneim and continued to procrastinate in the peace process, actions which run contrary to the alliance's advocacy of an independent Palestinian state, with Jerusalem as its capital, the return of the Golan Heights to Syria, withdrawal from southern Lebanon and ensuring Israeli security without the need for occupation forces.

In a show of solidarity against the unjust usurpation of Palestinian rights, the IAAIP took part in a peaceful demonstration at Jabal Abu Ghneim last March, denouncing the new settlement, and later held discussions with Israel's Peace Now movement and with Palestinian representatives at Orient House. A joint statement emphasised that the Israeli government "must stop" building in Jabal Abu Ghneim because it is "against the letter and spirit of the Oslo accords, breeds mistrust and jeopardises negotiations on the final status."

Netanyahu's settlement policies and procrastination in the peace process are not the only battles Copenhagen members have had to fight during the first year of their organisation's existence.

A vicious debate erupted in Egypt following the creation of the alliance, and the Egyptian signatories faced accusations of betrayal and selling out to the "enemy." Opposition reached a peak when writers Lotfi El Kholi and Abdul Moneim Said, head of the Al Ahran Centre for Political and Strategic Studies, were reprimanded by the Press Syndicate, of which they are members, and denounced by many intellectuals. "We didn't expect it to be easy,"

remarks Said, "but despite the skirmishes, I am fully satisfied."

In Jordan, detractors viewed the alliance with "suspicion and resisted its goal," according to George Hawatmeh, IAAIP Steering Committee member and editor-in-chief of the Jordan Times. "Others were sceptical and adopted a wait-and-see approach. Now, Copenhagen is remembered occasionally, in the knowledge that we have not made a difference to their lives," Hawatmeh told Al Ahran Weekly.

The IAAIP's relative incompetence, according to this Jordanian member, is due to "the extremely difficult political circumstances" created by Netanyahu's leadership and his "obstinate policies" regarding the peace process. "Netanyahu and his right-wing coalition should have been made to

'We have gone in not to serve as a bridgehead for the Israelis to normalise relations with the Arab World, but to wrench Arab rights from Israel which has long usurped them by the force of arms.'

feel our presence and the depth of our message much more strongly than has been the case," Hawatmeh said.

The Jabal Abu Ghneim march was by far the most significant event in the first year of the IAAIP. Other alliance activities included two roving discussion panels in Ramallah and Tel Aviv, four steering committee meetings and meetings with different sectors of society. One meeting last June arranged by Tel Aviv's former mayor and army General Shlomo Lahat brought IAAIP members face-to-face with a large number of Israeli reserve officers, while another engaged in discussion with the Jerusalem Women's Movement composed of Palestinian and Israeli women united for peace. Government officials in Jerusalem, Ramallah, Amman and Cairo were also approached by alliance members.

Four sub-committees were established, including one on the implementation of agreements to monitor violations of the letter and spirit of signed agreements. Another sub-committee will monitor violence and verify whether parties are "doing everything possible to limit violence." The third, on regional cooperation, monitors main areas of regional cooperation and seeks ways of "promoting people-to-people regional cooperation." Finally, the subcommittee on settlements works to collect information on settlements and organise fact-finding missions to the settlements.

While these activities were looked upon with satisfaction by the members, other initiatives by the Israeli chapter such as municipal administrative cooperation between Egypt, Israel, Jordan and the Palestinian [National] Authority, the translation and publication of children's literature, as well as joint television productions came under heavy fire.

For the Egyptians, such activities were clearly moves towards normalising rela-

tions with Israel, "which we do not agree to," said El Kholi. He emphasised that attempts by some Israelis to implement projects outside the agreed framework of Copenhagen, which stated that normalising relations with Israel was out of the question for the time being, are unacceptable.

"There was a clash because we felt it was not the right time for this," Said said, "and finally they agreed to shelve it."

David Kimche, president of the Israeli Council on Foreign Relations and member of the IAAIP's Steering Committee, drew a clear line between the work of the IAAIP and normalisation. "These are two separate issues," he told the weekly. "We have to join hands in the struggle for peace between Israelis and Arabs." Suggesting that normalising relations with Israel "will come in

time," he added that Israelis "need not go cap in hand begging for normalisation. If you don't want to visit us, have trade with us, or have cultural relations with us, it is up to you, not us."

Hawatmeh asserted that the Arab members of the alliance are well aware of their objectives. "We have gone in not to serve as a bridgehead for the Israelis to normalise relations with the Arab World," he said, "but to wrench Arab rights from Israel which has long usurped them by the force of arms."

Egyptian members also criticised the disparity in efforts being made by members of the Israeli chapter. According to El Kholi, some members of the Israeli chapter "did not assume their responsibilities and embarrassed the rest of the Israeli chapter who worked hard during the year." Egypt's former ambassador to Moscow and IAAIP member Salah Bassiouni agrees with El Kholi that some Israeli members are "not doing what they should have" for the alliance. "Other peace movements in Israel who support Copenhagen are doing more than the Israeli signatories," he noted.

Kimche, the former director-general of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, strongly denied the impression that he has lost interest. "I feel more determined than ever to do everything I can for peace," he said, committing the Israeli chapter of the IAAIP to "bringing together the various Israeli peace movements behind our efforts to cooperate with our Arab brethren."

Kimche said that the "misleading impression" of lack of interest on the part of the Israelis was due to the fact that there are already over 20 peace movements in Israel vying for attention. "The founding of another peace movement was not a revolutionary act," he said, acknowledging that the alliance overall has not done enough to help achieve peace. "We, the people, espe-

cially the members of the IAAIP, must do more to pressure our governments to do that is possible to propel the peace process forward," he argued.

"There are always arguments, amounting to tension at times in our meeting halls," Hawatmeh said, "but I think our Israeli partners know what needs to be done in order for this alliance to be kept alive."

Said also believes that the Israeli members "didn't put in what we think they should have for the alliance over there," but feels that the IAAIP has contributed to more moderate thinking by sectors of Israeli society regarding the creation of a Palestinian state, settlements and Jerusalem. "Copenhagen was picked up by both grassroots movements like Peace Now and by mainstream political parties," noted Said. "This created certain realties within the formal Israeli political forces."

Another drawback for the alliance, alliance has been meagre recognition on the international level. "Our work has been hampered by the disturbing fact that the Israelis, Europeans and Americans do not know about the IAAIP's existence," he granted, Hawatmeh said.

IAAIP members had hoped to hold an international peace conference in Jordan last year, but their plans were deferred to the last quarter of this year, to allow for preparatory meetings scheduled in London, Europe and the U.S. in the coming few months. Most of the IAAIP's budget for 1998, allocated by the EU at around 1,000,000 ECU, will be spent on the conference. Kimche believes that the IAAIP needs more funds and more international support. "It needs more people in Israel and in the Arab countries who are willing to dedicate themselves to the cause of peace," he added.

The IAAIP is expected to try and establish itself in the U.S. after the Jerusalem conference, in order to gain a foothold in the country with the most powerful Jewish lobby in the world. "We're not in a hurry," said El Kholi, "because first we have to achieve an Arab-Israeli common ground before addressing the U.S."

Very recently, former Assistant Secretary for Near East Affairs Robert Pelletreau became a member of the alliance's Steering Committee, while former U.S. Secretary of State James Baker is a candidate for membership of the IAAIP's Board of Governors. If he accepts, Baker will join former Spanish President Felipe Gonzalez and the chairman of the foreign relations committee of Russia's Duma, Alexander Susholov.

The Egyptian chapter of the IAAIP, as well as other key figures in Egypt, are expected to launch a new peace group called the Cairo Peace Movement, for "all peace lovers in Egypt," according to Bassiouni. The principles of the group will be along the same lines as those to be found in the tenets of the Copenhagen Declaration, but it is as yet unclear whether the Cairo Peace Movement will be part of the Egyptian chapter of the IAAIP, or an independent group.

Cabinet seems split over court ruling on temporary press law

(Continued from page 1)

An official source told the Jordan Times yesterday that the government was studying various options open to it. The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, explained, that the government can press ahead with what it is doing since it has submitted the temporary law as a draft legislation for Parliament to act on, provided that the court's notification of the ruling arrives at the prime minister's desk.

Speaker of the Lower House Sa'ad Hayel Srour discounted this option, however, when he said in press statements published yesterday that the House, which has referred the draft law to a National Guidance Committee, will not discuss the bill until after the legal aspect of the ruling is clarified. He added that the government can submit a new law, which is the other option available to the government. A third option is for the Cabinet to forget altogether about introducing amendments and to

stay with the 1993 law as is.

The ruling of the High Court has put an end to an eight-month controversy over the amendments. The unprecedented ruling, which deemed as unconstitutional a temporary press law that set the minimum capital required for the establishment of newspapers, imposed heavy penalties on violators of the press law and gave the government a say in closing down newspapers in cases of repeated violations, entails, inter alia, the ability of weekly newspapers that were suspended by the government last September to resume publication. The amendments were a main point of contention in the journalism milieu and between officials and journalists as well.

While some considered the amendments as necessary changes that tabloid newspapers have harmed the country's reputation and image at the local and international levels, others saw them as anathema to the democratisation process.

Jordan supports collective Arab effort for peace — Mutawi

(Continued from page 1)

ries — Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, the Palestinians and probably Gulf power-broker Saudi Arabia was most likely.

Bu in private, a Jordanian official, echoing singular Arab fears, said that a full-fledged Arab summit could fail unless it was adequately prepared for.

He said Jordan would only attend if the summit's objective was clearly identified.

"It would not be conducive to attend a meeting that might only take negative attitudes and engage in condemnation without leaving room for political manoeuvring," said one official, who requested anonymity.

Another official said it was premature to hold a summit before Israel and the Palestinians responded to recent U.S. proposals to revive their dialogue, halted for 10 months.

"We cannot fully evaluate the

situation now before U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright meets separately with Mr. Netanyahu and with Mr. Arafat in Europe by mid-February to get their reactions to American proposals," he told the Jordan Times.

Mr. Clinton has asked Mr. Netanyahu to agree to "a significant and credible" troop pullback in the West Bank in return for a tougher Palestinian crackdown on guerrilla violence. Israeli news reports said that Mr. Netanyahu had refused to go beyond handling 9.5 per cent of the West Bank, where an estimated 140,000 Jewish settlers live among some two million Palestinians.

Mr. Arafat dismissed the Israeli offer as "peanuts." Palestinians have in the past demanded that Israel give up at least 30 per cent of the disputed area before starting talks on final peace settlement.

Turning war-ravaged region of Croatia into haven of self-sufficient farmers, small businesspersons

By Caroline Smith
Reuters

PAKRAC, Croatia — There is an old Chinese proverb which says "to help a hungry man don't give him a fish — teach him how to use a hook."

This proverb has been embraced by international aid workers in Croatia and is turning a war-ravaged region of the country into a haven of self-sufficient farmers and small businesspersons.

Ljubica Klajic is one of hundreds of people living in and around Pakrac, in central Croatia, who benefit from a micro-enterprise scheme run by International Rescue Committee (IRC), a non-sectarian, voluntary organisation.

Her barn, which backs onto the family home, may smell like a pig sty but it represents her dreams and her future with its three cows, three calves and seven small, pink piglets.

She is a Serb, and the animals are her only hope of surviving economically in a town that was riven in two by Croatia's war with its Serb minority.

Her 17-year-old daughter Radmila is said to be Pakrac's brightest student and hopes to go on to Zagreb University to study medicine, despite having spent the last six years living in an appalling condition.

The IRC has dispensed with the idea of giving financial handouts to the needy and instead gives them the money in kind — in Ljubica's case in the form of a cow.

She was also given one by a Christian charity My Neighbourhood and the third belonged to her mother.

Each grant is worth \$1,000 and the recipients pledge to return a fifth of that amount in any commodity they go — firewood from trees on their land, eggs from their chickens, meat, milk or skills and services.

Ljubica now sells her cows' milk at the local market in Pakrac

and hopes eventually to buy a milking machine, or be included on the rounds of a local dairy which will collect the milk and pasteurise it for sale.

"It means a lot to me, somehow I became somebody again," she says of the project. "Until now it's not been such a great income — I had to invest in hay. But for the future, for my daughter, it's very valuable."

The family — Ljubica, whose husband died 13 years ago, her mother and daughter — were some of the few Serbs who stayed in Pakrac throughout the war.

"It was like a prison," she said. "The worst thing was not being able to go anywhere. My house was destroyed so we came to live with my mother."

A town divided

The town quickly divided when Serbs opposed Croatia's bid for independence from Yugoslavia in 1991. On one side of the main street buildings are barely standing, and the spire on the Serb Orthodox Church is destroyed.

On the other side of town, predominantly populated by Croats, the damage is much less severe.

The Serbs who were driven out by nationalist Croats are beginning to return home and the IRC project is helping many restart their lives.

Its grants have taken the form of beehives complete with bees, thousands of eggs and chickens, hundreds of cows, the odd horse and even a carpet-cleaning machine.

Each recipient has to go through a rigorous application procedure and is given training before receiving a grant.

Most have become surprisingly good business men and women.

Some 85 per cent of beneficiaries are aged between 25 and 55 and all had a monthly family income of less than \$200. The IRC gave 243 grants last year.



Ljubica Klajic, 83, stands outside her tiny house on the outskirts of the central Croatian town of Pakrac. Klajic is one of some 800 elderly and vulnerable people in the region who receive donations of food and firewood from the International Rescue Committee (Reuters photo)

worth some \$220,000, in 40 villages.

"It does have an impact," said Mike Kendall, country director for the IRC in Croatia. "People who have received grants feel more confident... They can provide for their children who go to school, buy them clothes and books."

"When you are looking at assisting refugees, this kind of programme is ideal. It works. A thousand dollars doesn't go very far, but you can buy animals which might produce milk which you can then sell, trade or use."

Kendall said bartering had become part of the economy with beneficiaries trading skills for food or firewood.

Small wonder in a town where the saw-mill is disused, the textile factory is all but closed and a ther-

mal spa no longer attracts many visitors.

Scheme helps the most vulnerable

Pakrac Project Coordinator Natasha Skrbic said the IRC was also helping the most vulnerable members of the community with goods given back as the 20 per cent return by grant beneficiaries.

One such person is 83-year-old Luba Gajic, who lives alone in one room in a tiny brick-built house by the fields on the edge of town.

In a suffocatingly overheated room with walls blackened by woodsmoke, she has a high, single bed, a stove, some old wooden stools and a dresser containing her worldly possessions.

A survivor of a World War II

concentration camp, Gajic has to touch with all her children and depends on neighbours and friends to help — she is also illiterate.

Last year she was given 25% of pork by the IRC and now she has enough firewood.

Gajic is one of more than 800 elderly and vulnerable people who receive household items, clothing, grant repayments, and other aid, helped by war refugees and displaced people who have found a little more than themselves.

"I can't imagine how I would survive without you," she says, smiling. Gajic tells 1977 was her last visit. "I'm old, but I like to live," she beams.

There may not be much fishing going on in Pakrac, but many people have learned to use their hooks.

TRC chief sees work hampered by financial cuts

By Ahmed Naser
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Work of the Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (TRC) is being hampered as the Ministry of Finance makes cuts in funding to essential aspects of its budget, said TRC Director General Yousef Abu Jamouse Tuesday.

"If we do not have proper financing, we will not be able to do our job," Mr. Abu Jamouse said. Established in 1995 as Jordan's first regulatory commission, the TRC recently witnessed major cuts in its budget by the Ministry of Finance.

The cuts conducted by the Budget Department of the Ministry of Finance came "without any good reason and without discussing it," said Mr. Abu Jamouse.

The largest reductions were: 80 per cent on machinery and equipment, 35 per cent on the transmission project, 60 per cent on consultation, and 72 per cent on equipment and furniture maintenance.

Mr. Abu Jamouse cited the reductions in the training budget as the most damaging to the TRC in the rapidly developing world of telecommunications.

When asked why the Budget Department had cut the TRC's budget, Department Director Abdul Rahman Ajlouni declined to fully elaborate saying that this was the case with all governmental departments.

Mr. Ajlouni added that if the TRC needed additional assistance, the Ministry of Finance would provide

additional funding during the fiscal year.

However, Mr. Abu Jamouse said he feared that the TRC would be changed into another "small collection department in the pocket of the Ministry of Finance, and stressed "[the ministry] may even come up to us and say: 'We need money, go out and collect some for us'."

Mr. Abu Jamouse noted that this "contradicts regulatory work." He said that the TRC should enjoy both financial and administrative independence, in accordance with the law, adding that "otherwise, it will be put under the mercy of government or its institutions."

According to article four of the 1995 Communications Law: "A legal entity to be named the 'Telecommunications Regulatory Commission' will be established in the Kingdom and shall have financial and administrative independence."

Moreover, the TRC's main objective as an independent regulator is to ensure that consumers enjoy telecommunications at affordable prices amidst a competitive monopoly-free market.

As such, paragraph A of Article 19 of the Communications Law states: "[The TRC] shall have an independent budget that is endorsed and certified by [the TRC's] board of directors for approval by the Council of Ministers."

The TRC is financed through income from the telecommunications sector which includes: revenue

from the issue of data-communications licences and their renewal, profits from services that the TRC provides, fines for violating the Telecommunications Law, grants approved by the Council of Ministers, government budget money and any other resources approved by the Council of Ministers.

According to Mr. Ajlouni, these resources are collected from the TRC and then redistributed to it according to the commission's need.

Russian company buys \$3.8m worth of Jordan's Al Safi salt

AMMAN (Petra) — Al Safi Salt Processing Company (SSPC) and a Russian international company Tuesday signed an agreement under which the SSPC will export \$3.8 million worth of Jordanian salt to Shan International Company.

The agreement was signed for the Jordanian company by its Board of Directors Chairman Talal Ureikat, while it was signed for the Russian company by its director general. The SSPC last November signed an agreement with a Turkish company, under which the SSPC will export \$3 million worth of Jordanian salt to Turkey. Later the agreement had been amended to provide for exporting \$4.5 million worth of Jordanian salt to Turkey.

JEDCO to organise four exhibitions, participate in another 13 this year

AMMAN (Petra) — The Jordan Exports Development and Commercial Centres Corporation (JEDCO) will organise four Jordanian exhibitions in four countries this year and will participate in 13 international exhibitions, director of JEDCO's promotion and exhibitions department, Bashar Khasawneh, said.

Mr. Khasawneh added that JEDCO will organise two industrial exhibitions in the Czech and Kazakhstan republics in addition to two others in Kenya and Saudi Arabia.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 23, 1998

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services Inc.

ARIES: (March 21-April 19) — You're a strong leader, and groups are always looking for strong leaders. Your group has probably been doing that for some time. Everybody's got good ideas, but they seem to be stuck in talking about it. You can get them into action. That's your strong point. So go ahead and push. They love it when you do that.

TAURUS: (April 20-May 20) — If you want your dreams to come true, there will be work required. Your assignment is to have this work be something you love. You can either get yourself in a job you already know you love, or you can change your attitude. You can pretend you love whatever job you're in. This is not cheating, and may be necessary today.

GEMINI: (May 21-June 21) — Your dreams of travel should be starting to materialise. It might be difficult to get away, however. Something's got you stuck at home tonight. Not to worry. The fantasy is just outpacing the reality a bit. That's OK. Get your ideas talked out, then put them down in writing. That's the first step in making it happen.

CANCER: (June 22-July 22) — Paperwork concerning financial matters could dominate your life. There are so many rules and regulations. This might have to do with a loan. If your education or your future real estate purchase hangs in the balance, you've definitely got the motivation to it. Just take it one step at a time and you'll do fine.

LEO: (July 23-August 22) — You're becoming even more imaginative. Some of your ideas might seem downright impossible. That's OK. You can go ahead and take a leap of faith. Your partner is drawing the thing up and fixing everything into neat little rows. Go ahead and delegate that task, so you are uninhibited. It's a lot more fun.

VIRGO: (August 23-September 22) — You planning is going from the idea stage to the hands-on stage. Now you have to do the work to make the money to pay the bills to buy the house, or whatever it is you're up to. You knew this was going to happen eventually. Not much more fun than you thought it would be, but certainly worth doing to achieve your goal.

LIBRA: (September 23-October 23) — You are stable and your natural intelligence is enhanced. You're also lucky in terms of hopes and dreams involving love and children. Your chances of seeing them materialise increase in the next few months. It also helps to decide what you want, so ditch that today.

SCORPIO: (October 24-November 21) — You'll notice a change tonight. There will be more emphasis on home and family matters. You might also get interested in buying or selling real estate. If that's what you've been doing recently, the deal is about to close. You won't need to worry about much longer. The time for tinkering with it is past.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22-December 21) — Skills you learn now will be directly applicable to your career. If what you're aiming doesn't fit with your career, this is a clue you're in the wrong profession. The stuff you're learning will help you to succeed, but you have to figure out how and when. Do that after you get the skills down pat.

CAPRICORN: (December 22-January 19) — You're still learning and making plans. You're very analytical right now, and that's the best way to handle financial situations. It's OK to make long-range plans. That's something you do naturally. The Aquarius influence helps you draw up a blueprint that you'll be able to build from. Do that today.

AQUARIUS: (January 20-February 18) — Focus your attention on ways to make more money. This is not cheating. Sometimes trustful people like yourself think they have to do everything for free. That's ridiculous. You might as well go ahead and make a fortune. Go ahead and think of all the nice things you'll do for others once you get it.

PISCES: (February 19-March 20) — When Neptune was in Capricorn, it helped you come up with long-range goals with your friend. You probably got a lot accomplished. Now it's going into Aquarius, and you'll be dealing with rules and regulation. That will be frustrating initially, as in right now. Just relax. You might as well get used to it.

Birthstone of January: Garnet — Rose Quartz

Arab Bank 1997 profits up 11.6 per cent

By Suleiman Khalidi
Reuters

AMMAN — Arab Bank Group, one of the region's main financial institutions, said on Tuesday its 1997 net profits rose 11.6 per cent to a record \$220.7 million from \$197.8 million in 1996, bolstered by its wide geographic spread.

"Our 1997 results are due to the performance of our branches in Jordan and outside and we hope in 1998 we will do even better," Abdul Majed Shoman, chairman of Arab Bank Group, told Reuters.

Mr. Shoman said the buoyant performance in 1997 was due to the bank's wide geographic spread across Europe, the U.S. and the Far East,

which allows it to offset sluggish growth in some Arab countries by better earnings in other regions.

"Arab Bank's presence in over 40 countries gives strength to the bank and helps it to keep always improving its results and have at least between 10-15 per cent profits annually," Mr. Shoman added.

The bank's total balance sheet, obtained by Reuters, rose 8.3 per cent to \$22.5 billion at the end of 1997 from \$20.8 billion in 1996. The bank's assets rose 5.7 per cent to over \$16 billion against \$15.9 billion at the end of 1996.

JORDAN FINANCIAL MARKET											
HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - JERUSALEM											
TELEPHONE: 607171 / 607179											
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR TUESDAY 27/01/1998											
PRICE 12 MONTHS	COMPANY'S NAME	P/E	DIV.	NO. OF SHARES	NO. OF TRADING	VALUE TRADED JD	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE		
344.000	250.000	ARAB BANK	15.1	1.22	8	200	68930	330.00	329.00	1.00	-
2.340	1.680	JOR. NATIONAL BK.	4	0.00	4	1150	2070	1.79	1.80	0.01	-
3.340	1.420	BANK OF JORDAN	4.5	0.00	6	2160	3154	1.54	1.46	0.08	-
2.480	1.650	INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK.	10.2	6.14	1	5000	8500	1.70	1.70	-	-
0.970	0.620	JOR. GULF BANK	3.9	10.61	6	13700	8916	0.46	0.46	-	-
4.090	2.250	JOR. ISLAMIC BANK	12.2	4.02	1	1000	2390	2.29	2.29	-	-
1.530	1.050	UNION TR. DEV. TRV.	7	0.00	1	5150	5459	1.04	1.04	-	-
1.620	0.870	SEIT. AL-WAL. (SEITRA)	5	17.05	1	250	220	0.89	0.88	0.01	-
BANK SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 233.17 %CHG: -0.28 28 26420 96439											
2.120	1.590	JOR. FRENCH TRUST	5.8	7.35	3	5450	10806	2.04	2.04	-	-
2.250	1.820	ARAB LIFE INSUR.	7.7	5.05	1	200	360	1.90	1.80	0.10	-
INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 120.20 %CHG: -0.49 4 5450 11164											
2.050	1.550	JOR. ELECTRIC PWR.	9.4	5.18	4	1550	3007	1.93	1.94	0.01	-
8.800	7.900	JOR. HOTEL TOURISM	12.0	1.21	3	3933	2824	6.29	6.40	0.11	-
7.500	3.750	VECL. ORIENT. FID.	11.0	3.48	1	100	503	5.29	5.03	0.26	-
1.550	0.930	JOR. PORTFOLIO	9	0.00	1	250	260	1.04	1.04	-	-
4.000	2.890	ARAB INTL. INV. EDUC.	10.2	0.00	1	500	1840	3.82	3.82	-	-
2.150	1.620	UNION TR. DEV. TRV.	8.2	6.40	6	2650	4558	1.72	1.72	-	-
SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 116.61 %CHG: -0.03 16 8643 39112											
4.450	2.750	JOR. CHEMIST FACT.	20.3	3.64	5	1537	4636	3.02	3.02	-	-
11.160	9.200	JOR. PETROL. REFINERY	10.1	8.55	3	660	6847	10.36	10.40	0.04	-
4.700	3.440	ARAB FARM. MFG.	12.0	4.59	4	1650	7182	4.36	4.36	-	-
8.000	2.200	JORDAN DAIRY	9.4	8.73	1	20000	28000	2.80	2.80	-	-
8.000	4.400	TAB. ALZAMA. TR. INV.	14.1	0.00	2	5350	10743	5.75	5.75	-	-
0.430	0.440	LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	9.5	0.00	4	2850	3273	0.45	0.45	-	-
0.480	0.510	NATIONAL INDE.	9	0.00	1	250	148	0.59	0.59	-	-
1.150	0.370	INTERNED. PETRO. CHEM.	9	0.00	6	1350	638	0.42	0.42	-	-
1.620	0.400	BATEL. ELKUS. WTR. MFG.	25.8	0.00	2	350	370	1.02	1.07	0.05	-
0.820	0.530	JOR. SUPPLY-CHEN	9	0.00	3	1500	670	0.58	0.58	-	-
1.800	0.820	UNIV. MOD. INDS.	2	0.00	3	3000	2550	0.85	0.85	-	-
1.410	0.690	JOR. INDS. RESEARCH	10.1	12.23	18	6700	6865	0.73	0.73	-	-
1.620	1.350	HAB. CHELONING	14.1	4.67	8	6700	10530	1.50	1.50	-	-
0.960	0.810	JOR. NEW CABLE CO.	16.5	0.00	3	3000	2700	0.90	0.90	-	-
1.200	0.860	UNION CH. & VBO.	44.8	0.00	1	4000	3920	0.98	0.98	-	-
0.910	0.700	JORDAN STEEL	31.7	7.14	7	4400	3080	0.70	0.70	-	-
0.860	0.570	KID. BMT. COMPLEX	7.6	16.13	4	11150	6803	0.61	0.62	0.01	-
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 110.46 %CHG: -0.09 79 64492 114990											
GRAND TOTAL INDEX: 186.83 %CHG: -0.14 127 107895 261906											
PARALLEL MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR TUESDAY 27/01/1998											
1.050	1.030	EXPORT & FIN. MK. 75%	9	0.00	6	1800	1372	1.05	1.01	0.04	-
0.410	0.340	JOR. TRADE FAC.	9	0.00	3	1050	384	0.37	0.37	-	-
0.800	0.660	UNION TR. DEV. TRV.	9	0.00	7	48500	9305	0.70	0.71	0.01	-
0.970	0.360	ARAB FID. INVEST.	9	0.00	26	58950	30656	0.32	0.32	0.01	-
1.000	0.850	ARAB JOR. INVEST. CO.	9	0.00	1	250	230	0.88	0.88	-	-
0.440	0.440	ARAB FOOD & MFG.	9	0.00	1	1000	450	0.45	0.45	-	-
0.500	0.270	ARAB INTL. INV. TRV.	33.4	0.00	4	624	176	0.28	0.29	0.01	-
0.750	0.380	BATEL. ELKUS. WTR. MFG.	9	0.00	42	71750	32415	0.67	0.67	0.01	-
0.820	0.400	BATEL. ELKUS. WTR. MFG.	9	0.00	1	250	125	0.49	0.50	0.01	-
0.730	0.550	BATEL. ELKUS. WTR. MFG.	9	0.00	2	1250	688	0.71	0.71	-	-
0.950	0.570	ADVANCED FARM. IND.	9	0.00	22	13568	7990	0.58	0.59	0.01	-
0.820	0.490	KATIL. POULTRY	9	0.00	6	10000	5520	0.53	0.54	0.01	-
0.910	0.350	OPTIONAL. READING 75%	9	0.00	1	50	22	0.73	0.69	0.04	-
1.000	0.640	HAB. CHELONING 75%	93.2	0.00	1	500	210	0.67	0.67	-	-
1.210	1.000	MUTRAN	9	0.00	23	17192	19448	1.15	1.13	0.02	-
1.000	0.810	KERAL. PRINT. CO. 75%	9	0.00	1	200	104	0.81	0.77	0.04	-
GRAND TOTAL INDEX: 157 224834 109314											

* New 12 months low
 * Stock dividend during the past 12 months
 * Listed during the past 12 months
 * P/E ratio is 100 or more
 * Negative P/E
 * Rating is zero or N/A for the most recent year

THE Daily Crossword Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

ACROSS

- Bahrain bigwig
- City on the Irish River
- Called sheepishly
- Cappelletti or Torretta
- Singer Falena
- Shadow
- Snack sold by 40 A in London
- Gaucho's cattle catcher
- Cassia family plant
- Alder or elder
- Son of Adam
- Urgent
- Spl. e.g.
- Tight spot
- Cold spots
- Rights grp.
- Peer's address
- Gods of ancient Rome
- Stan Kenton classic
- Policeman
- Portuguese capital, to residents
- Seine tributary
- Short shorts
- Serving dish for stew
- Glob ending?
- Warfare precursor
- Tutolog or whitewash
- Gauge face
- Devers and Parent
- Par minus two
- Snack sold by 40 A in Georgia
- K.T. the singer
- High sign
- Org.
- Pungent product
- Sacred act
- Wide shoe size

DOWN

- Farm produce
- Stick in the mud
- Privy to
- Gathers
- Ancient
- Carlo
- Pronounce indistinctly
- "Kiss Me"
- Mac
- Israeli writer
- Ft.
- Part of QED
- High-tail it
- Spike, e.g.
- Sap of energy
- Struck around
- Surrender formally
- Break out of one's shell
- Sneeze sound
- Sacked out
- Misplays
- Prefix for grave
- Van Halen
- Singer Della
- Sultry singer
- Part of MIT
- Israeli airline
- Sally Field film
- Out in the open
- Edict
- Hub & in
- Corp. honchos
- Lock with a pin
- Jamaican citrus fruit
- Frankenstein's assistant
- Isac, the golfer
- don
- majestic
- Rational
- Direction from Hartford to Boston
- Walkover in a tournament

Peanuts

YES, MAAM, WE GOT THE NEW DOG LICENSE. WE ALSO GOT A DRIVER'S LICENSE AND A FISHING LICENSE...

NO, SHE SAYS YOU DON'T NEED A LICENSE FOR THAT.

Andy Capp

YOU MIGHT CHANGE YOUR MIND IF YOU GOT TO KNOW ME BETTER, DEAR.

YOU CAN ASK ANYTHING YOU WANT ABOUT ME.

FAIR ENOUGH.

BUT WON'T YOUR ANGELS MIND BEING ASKED A LOAD OF QUESTIONS? WHAT TIME IS SHE DUE IN?

Mutt'n'Jeff

Daily Business Deal

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Ministry of Planning study highlights industrial weaknesses, deficiencies

A STUDY conducted by the Ministry of Planning about the competitive edge of the Jordanian industries has shown that they rely primarily on manufacturing and processing raw materials and that they do not have a long-term strategy. The study also found that the industries were unable to benefit from Jordan's unique geographical location and from the economic protocols signed with neighboring countries.

The study covered the six industrial fields of textile, cement, potash, phosphate, pharmaceuticals and Dead Sea minerals. "The study was different from others as it was very specialized," said Yusef Mansour, head of the technical unit at the Ministry of Planning. He said the study examined all matters related to the industries and was based on direct meetings between the members of the study team and the industrialists and plant workers.

"The importance of this study lies in the fact that Arab countries have started to lose their relative advantage in terms of central location,

large area, cheap labour and raw materials," Dr. Mansour indicated. "Such a retreat is due to competition coming from countries in east and central Europe as they are closer to the West," he said. In addition, Dr. Mansour mentioned the drop in demand for raw materials which are abundant in the Arab countries.

Consequently, Dr. Mansour explained, Jordanian industries should raise the value added input on what is already existing by moving to modern and advanced industries and producing hi-tech products that require a good knowledge and technology. He indicated that the aim of the study was to create a highly advanced industrial pattern in Jordan in order to be able to compete with international industries.

Dr. Mansour said that the industries were chosen because it was easy to obtain information about them. He revealed that other industrial sectors will be studied in order to provide an "information bank" about Jordanian industries (Al Arab Al Yawm).

Abu Hijleh says transparency concept is only theoretical and not being implemented

THE SOCIETY grouping the brokers at the Amman Financial Market has confirmed the views of some investors that there are leaks of information from some board members of certain companies. "We hope that the people responsible for implementing the new securi-

ties law to include clear articles to remedy this situation and stop its negative effect on financial disclosure," the president of the society, Abdul Mutaleb Abu Hijleh, said noting that the concept of transparency is not actually and practically implemented (Al Arab Al Yawm).

New Jordanian finance lease firm to be launched next month with JD10m capital

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A new finance lease company in Jordan will be launched next month with a JD10 million capital to help in financing the purchases of equipment and transportation machinery for small scale industries and entrepreneurs, a spokesman for the firm said Tuesday.

Taher Assaf, director general of Arab National Lease Company (ANLC), which is totally owned by the Arab Bank, said that his firm will finance "purchase of assets" such as buses, heavy machinery, trucks, earth moving equipment for contracting companies and manufacturing equipment for individuals, medium-size industries and factories.

"If a particular factory or individual wants to expand the production capacity and was unable to purchase the necessary machinery, we will be ready to help by buying and leasing the needed equipment after a thorough study of the project," Dr. Assaf told the Jordan Times.

"During this process, the ownership of the machinery will remain with the ANLC," he added.

"But if the investor wants to own this machinery, he should pay the cost plus an additional profit for us," said Dr. Assaf.

"The difference between the capital lease firms and

the banks' work is that we do not ask for a guarantee for purchasing the required equipment and we do not accept deposits," he added.

Dr. Assaf said that the capital lease firms would study "thoroughly" any project submitted to them before approving the financing of the project. "This type of finance exists in several countries in the world including the Middle East, especially Tunisia, where the Arab Bank has launched a similar venture few years ago," said Dr. Assaf.

He emphasized that the investments in this type of firms in Tunisia amount to more than 500 million Tunisian dinars.

Dr. Assaf emphasized that the finance lease firms find "some" difficulties to work under the prevailing regulations in the Kingdom which do not take this type of firms into consideration.

Therefore, legal advisors in the Arab Bank have submitted a draft law to the Ministry of Justice that would facilitate the work of capital lease firms in the Kingdom.

The ANLC is not the first capital lease firm to operate in Jordan.

Several other capital lease firms operated in Jordan in the past but failed to continue due to some "regulations" which did not help these firms to continue.

"We hope that we will succeed in our work because if this venture suc-

ceed, it will open the gate for others to join," said Dr. Assaf.

"If this experience succeeds," said Dr. Assaf, "investments in this field

might exceed JD100 million in less than three years."

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The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates									
	USD	EUR	GBP	JPY	CHF	HKD	SGD	AUD	NZD
US Dollar	1.0000	0.9375	0.6563	146.00	0.6563	7.7660	0.6563	1.0000	0.6563
DE Mark	1.9364	1.0000	0.6563	163.33	0.6563	7.9364	0.6563	1.0000	0.6563
GB Sterling	1.5460	1.5460	1.0000	160.33	0.6563	7.5460	0.6563	1.0000	0.6563
CH Franc	1.4536	1.4536	1.4536	166.63	1.0000	7.4536	0.6563	1.0000	0.6563
JP Yen	0.0068	0.0068	0.0068	1.0000	0.0068	7.0068	0.6563	1.0000	0.6563
CA Dollar	0.6026	0.6026	0.6026	107.16	0.6026	7.0026	0.6563	1.0000	0.6563
IT Lira	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	1936.27	0.0000	7.0000	0.6563	1.0000	0.6563
NL Guilder	0.0036	0.0036	0.0036	203.71	0.0036	7.0036	0.6563	1.0000	0.6563
FR Franc	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	65.48	0.0065	7.0065	0.6563	1.0000	0.6563

Middle Eastern Currencies									
	USD	EUR	GBP	JPY	CHF	HKD	SGD	AUD	NZD
US Dollar	1.0000	0.9375	0.6563	146.00	0.6563	7.7660	0.6563	1.0000	0.6563
Jordan Dinar	1.4100	1.4100	1.4100	163.33	0.6563	7.9364	0.6563	1.0000	0.6563
Saudi Riyal	0.2666	0.2666	0.2666	160.33	0.6563	7.5460	0.6563	1.0000	0.6563
Bahraini Dinar	2.46	2.46	2.46	166.63	0.6563	7.4536	0.6563	1.0000	0.6563
Qatar Dinar	0.2746	0.2746	0.2746	160.33	0.6563	7.5460	0.6563	1.0000	0.6563
Kuwait Dinar	3.2962	3.2962	3.2962	166.63	0.6563	7.4536	0.6563	1.0000	0.6563
Emirates Dinar	0.2723	0.2723	0.2723	160.33	0.6563	7.5460	0.6563	1.0000	0.6563
Lebanese Lira	0.06	0.06	0.06	1936.27	0.0000	7.0000	0.6563	1.0000	0.6563
Egyptian	0.2343	0.2343	0.2343	160.33	0.6563	7.5460	0.6563	1.0000	0.6563

Energy									
	USD	EUR	GBP	JPY	CHF	HKD	SGD	AUD	NZD
Brent	16.90	16.90	16.90	166.63	0.6563	7.4536	0.6563	1.0000	0.6563
N. Texas	17.33	17.33	17.33	160.33	0.6563	7.5460	0.6563	1.0000	0.6563
Bonny	16.90	16.90	16.90	166.63	0.6563	7.4536	0.6563	1.0000	0.6563
Dubai	13.99	13.99	13.99	160.33	0.6563	7.5460	0.6563	1.0000	0.6563
U.S. Gas	122.00	122.00	122.00	166.63	0.6563	7.4536	0.6563	1.0000	0.6563

Metal Prices									
	USD	EUR	GBP	JPY	CHF	HKD	SGD	AUD	NZD
Gold (oz's)	300.25	300.25	300.25	166.63	0.6563	7.4536	0.6563	1.0000	0.6563
Silver (oz's)	6.15	6.15	6.15	160.33	0.6563	7.5460	0.6563	1.0000	0.6563
Platinum (oz's)	385.5	385.5	385.5	166.63	0.6563	7.4536	0.6563	1.0000	0.6563
AL (3 Months)	1646	1646	1646	160.33	0.6563	7.5460	0.6563	1.0000	0.6563
CU (3 Months)	1778	1778	1778	166.63	0.6563	7.4536	0.6563	1.0000	0.6563
Zinc (3 Months)	1173	1173	1173	160.33	0.6563	7.5460	0.6563	1.0000	0.6563
Lead (3 Months)	527	527	527	166.63	0.6563	7.4536	0.6563	1.0000	0.6563
NI (3 Months)	6340	6340	6340	160.33	0.6563	7.5460	0.6563	1.0000	0.6563

Main Equity Indices									
	USD	EUR	GBP	JPY	CHF	HKD	SGD	AUD	NZD
New York	DOW JONES	7800.38	67.44	1.13	7808.94	7708.94	7712.84	7712.84	7712.84
New York	S&P 500	948.06	12.11	1.27	968.06	968.06	968.06	968.06	968.06
London	FT-SE 100	6326.3	66.1	1.7	6328.8	6321.4	6327.2	6327.2	6327.2
Tokyo	NIKKEI 225	16881.62	-61.71	-0.64	17188.3	16907.7	17073.3	17073.3	17073.3
Paris	CAC 40	3052.02	51.66	1.72	3054.33	3001.6	3000.47	3000.47	3000.47
Frankfurt	DAX	4278.78	53.38	1.28	4282.08	4268.31	4234.78	4234.78	4234.78

JOD Cross Rates									
	USD	EUR	GBP	JPY	CHF	HKD	SGD	AUD	NZD
US Dollar	0.708	0.710	0.710	1.181	1.181	1.181	1.181	1.181	1.181
GB Sterling	1.1751	1.181	1.181	1.181	1.181	1.181	1.181	1.181	1.181
DE Mark	0.5981	0.5981	0.5981	0.5981	0.5981	0.5981	0.5981	0.5981	0.5981
CH Franc	0.6884	0.6884	0.6884	0.6884	0.6884	0.6884	0.6884	0.6884	0.6884
FR Franc	0.1183	0.1183	0.1183	0.1183	0.1183	0.1183	0.1183	0.1183	0.1183
JP Yen	0.0027	0.0027	0.0027	0.0027	0.0027	0.0027	0.0027	0.0027	0.0027
NL Guilder	0.3816	0.3816	0.3816	0.3816	0.3816	0.3816	0.3816	0.3816	0.3816
IT Lira	0.0016	0.0016	0.0016	0.0016	0.0016	0.0016	0.0016	0.0016	0.0016

Auto industry overcapacity 40% worldwide — Ford chief

PARIS (AFP) — The world auto industry's production capacity is some 40 per cent higher than demand, and the situation is particularly bad in Europe, the president of U.S. auto giant Ford said Tuesday.

"There is 40 per cent overcapacity in the world," Alex Trotman said in an interview published in the La Tribune economic daily.

"There is particularly overcapacity in Europe, which is why profit margin is getting smaller and smaller."

"There is overcapacity in North America, but it is not so great as that in Europe," Trotman said.

"One of the few areas in the U.S. market without an overcapacity problem is light trucks, where the market is growing fast and could account for 50 per cent of total U.S. auto sales "perhaps as soon as 1998," Trotman said.

"Customers like the manageability of these vehicles, the high driver position, and the safety provided by four-wheel drive," Ford trimmed three billion dollars off its costs in 1997, "the chief reason for the increase in our 1997 profits," Trotman said, as prices are still falling.

"We will continue our efforts in 1998, but the cost reductions will not be so significant,"

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Nagano gears up for high-tech Olympics

NAGANO (AFP) — Organisers of next month's Nagano Olympics are counting on Japanese high technology to tackle expected traffic jams and provide favourable conditions for next month's Winter Games.

The central Japanese city has launched a new traffic control system to help Olympic athletes and officials weave their way through packed streets during the Games, which start on February 7.

Traffic jams are major headache for the Olympic organisers. The city suffers chronic congestion, with local residents heavily relying on private cars.

During the 16-days of the games, traffic jams are expected to span a combined 50 kilometres in the morning and 71 kilometres in the evening in the city.

"Success in the Olympics is largely dependent upon whether we can solve the traffic problem," explains Takeaki Namizuka, chief of the Nagano Traffic Control Centre under the Nagano police department.

"The new system is our strong weapon to save athletes and officials from traffic hell," Namizuka added.

Under the computer system, Olympic vehicles will get priority at junctions, the official said.

The system, in which sensors on main roads detect Olympic vehicles and adjust traffic signals to give them priority, was jointly developed by the National Police Agency and Japan's private sector, including NEC Corp., Hitachi Ltd. and Toyota Motor Corp.

The traffic centre is also capable of informing vehicles carrying athletes and officials of the most suitable route and the maximum time required to their venue by collecting traffic information through 130 optical sensors set at major corners in the city.

Hino Motors Ltd., the nation's largest truck manufacturer, will provide the latest hybrid bus, powered by a combination of electricity and gasoline.

Hino, affiliated with Toyota, sold the first three buses to Matsumoto Electric Railway Co., based in Nagano, to transport athletes during the Games, a company spokesman said.

Last month, the nation's biggest carmaker Toyota launched sales of "Prius," a hybrid passenger car.

Computers also play a crucial role at the Olympic sports venues.

At the \$260-million speed-skating rink, the ice will be maintained in perfect condition thanks to a high-speed computer, officials said.

"This automatic ice control system will be the heart of the rink," says an official from the M-Wave rink. The name comes from the 'M' shaped wooden roof.

Organisers will place state-of-the-art microphones under the ice and the ice hockey arena to provide the real sound of the athletes' blades.

The 5.4-centimetre special microphones, developed by Japan Broadcasting Corp. (NHK), the national television network, will be buried one centimetre below the surface, officials said.

"I hope that with the new microphones, viewers throughout the world will feel as if they are at the rinks," an organiser said.

In Hakuba, where the Alpine skiing events will take place, organisers will park a new medical vehicle equipped with a satellite telecommunications, to allow doctors access to medical data from remote hospitals should a skier suffer major injury.

The Olympic cauldron at the main stadium will be illuminated with a high-tech flame until the closing ceremony on February 23.

One burner in the cauldron will produce a red flame in daylight, and another will provide a waving flame even without wind, officials said.

Rovers beat Wednesday 3-0

LONDON (AFP) — A stunning individual goal by outstanding young Irish prospect Damien Duff rounded off an easy 3-0 win for Blackburn Rovers over Sheffield Wednesday in their fourth round FA Cup tie on Monday.

Duff's 87th minute effort added to a goal apiece from former Norwich duo Chris Sutton and Tim Sherwood handed Sheffield Wednesday, watched by just 15,000 home supporters, their first defeat in seven matches and Rovers an away tie at Premiership rivals West Ham.

The 18-year-old Duff, who was signed from Irish junior football, ran onto Jason Wilcox's pass lobbed it over a Sheffield defender transferred the ball from his right foot to his left and flicked it home from eight yards — boss Roy Hodgson rewarded him by substituting him immediately.

Sherwood, who reached the 1989 FA Cup semi-finals with Norwich, shot home in the 37th minute after 'keeper Kevin Pressman had saved brilliantly from Kevin Gallacher which followed a superb five man move.

The wonderful team effort had started with Rovers' Swiss defender Stephane Henchoz clearing off the line from Norwegian Petter Rudi's shot.

Sutton, who featured in Glenn Hoddle's last England squad, volleyed home in the 6th minute after Sheffield defender Jon Newsome had failed to clear Stuart Ripley's cross — Ripley then went off injured with what appeared to be a leg injury.

Newsome's nightmare continued as he volleyed over with the goal at his mercy after Rovers' 'keeper Tim Flowers had flapped at a corner, the former Leeds defender also had a first-half header superbly tipped over by Flowers.

Wednesday, who were beaten 2-1 by Arsenal in the last minute of extra-time of the 1993 FA Cup final replay, almost reduced the deficit in the second minute of half-time when Italian striker Benito Carbone's header hit the post.

Mutombo moves into All-Star starting spot

NEW YORK (AFP) — Atlanta's Dikembe Mutombo edged injured New York center Patrick Ewing for a starting berth on the East team in next month's National Basketball Association All-Star Game.

The NBA's 48th All-Star Game will be held February 8.

The African-born center received 476,432 votes compared to 441,347 for Ewing in the highest race, likely meaning an end to a 10-year streak of All-Star berths for Ewing.

Michael Jordan had the most votes with 1,028,235. The Chicago guard was joined in the East backcourt by Orlando's Anfernee Hardaway, who underwent knee surgery in December and is doubtful for the game.

"I'm very fortunate and very happy that the fans still have me in their thoughts," Jordan said. "To get the most votes is certainly gratifying. It's a sense of respect."

Detroit's Grant Hill and Cleveland's Shawn Kemp will start at forwards.

Indiana coach Larry Bird, Jordan's teammate on the 1992 Barcelona Olympics "Dream Team" gold medalists, will guide the East. Seattle coach George Karl will coach the West team.

Bird has said he might not show up to coach the All-Stars because he has other plans. Jordan said he would not mind.

"If he doesn't want to go, he doesn't have to go," Jordan said. "I don't think anyone should be made to do anything. If he doesn't feel comfortable and he has made plans, we have to respect that."

Los Angeles Lakers guard Kobe Bryant, who is not even a starter for his team, will become the youngest starter in All-Star history at 19 years and five months old, one year younger than former mark-holder Magic Johnson.

"Last year when I participated in the slam-dunk contest, the whole atmosphere surrounding All-Star weekend was so exciting," Bryant said. "This year, to be playing in the All-Star Game with all the greatest players in the league is going to be a great thrill again."

Playing behind Eddie Jones and Nick Van Exel, Bryant leads all NBA reserves with 17.3 points per game. He was second in votes to Seattle's Gary Payton among Western Conference backcourt players.

Center Shaquille O'Neal, who received 565,184 votes, is the other Laker in the starting lineup. O'Neal is averaging 27.4 points and 11.4 rebounds but missed 21 games this season with an abdominal strain.

"Even though I missed so many games, fans thought I was the best centre in the West. That means a lot to me," O'Neal said. Utah's Karl Malone and Minnesota's Kevin Garnett will start at forwards for the West.

This was the 12th All-Star selection for Jordan, the 11th for Malone, sixth for Kemp and O'Neal, fifth for Mutombo and Payton, fourth for Hill and Hardaway, second for Garnett and first for Bryant.

The 29 NBA coaches will vote for the remaining seven members of the All-Star teams in their respective conferences. NBA All-Star reserves will be announced later this week.

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& TANNIA HIRSH

A MATTER OF TECHNIQUE

Neither vulnerable. North deals.

NORTH
AKQJ92
AK82
QJ4
AJ87

WEST
AK104
Q985
QJ54
AK985

SOUTH
A7
QJ643
Q9768
AQ3

The bidding:
NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST
1A Pass INT Pass
2NT Pass 3NT Pass

Opening lead: Six of ♠

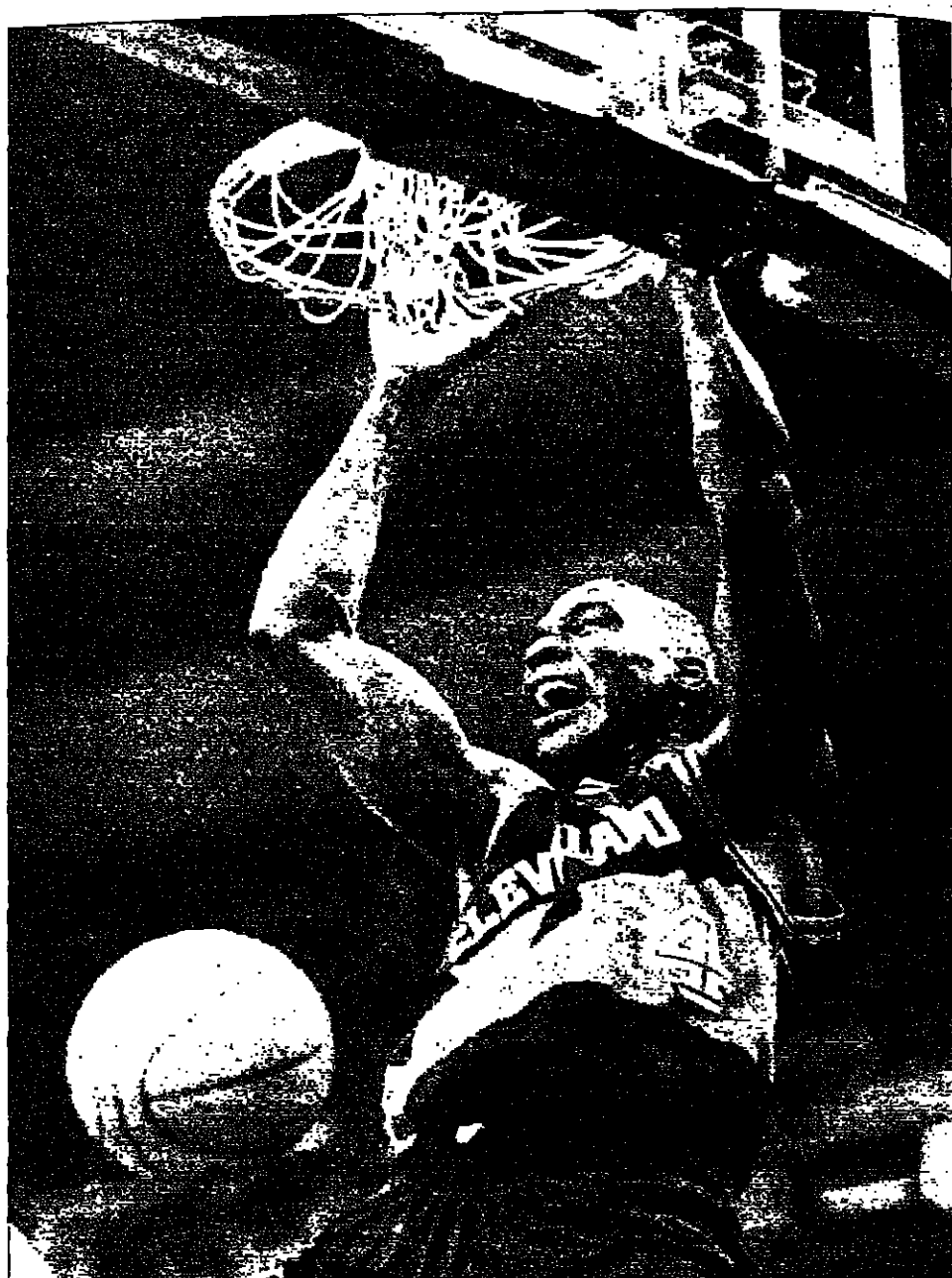
The list of master technicians in card play is relatively short. High on it you will find the name of Sami Kheila of Toronto. Here's an example of his technique from an international team event. The auction was routine. South's one-over-trump response was forcing. North's raise showed a balanced 18-19 points and five spades, and South went on to game.

West led a low club, taken by declarer's queen. With only eight tricks in sight, it was dangerous for declarer to try for a ninth trick in diamonds — the defenders might be able to score the ace of diamonds and four club tricks. That's what happened in another room, where the British declarer at three no trump led a diamond at trick two.

Better technique in this type of situation is to run your long suit to see what develops, so Kheila proceeded to reel off five spade tricks. West had to find three discards, and could not afford to part with a heart because that would set up two additional tricks in the suit for declarer. Two diamonds were easy to discard, but the third discard proved annoying.

If West discarded a club, declarer could afford to set up a diamond trick — the defenders would get only three club tricks and a diamond. So West elected to lead the third diamond.

Kheila made no mistake. After some thought, he led the jack of clubs from dummy. West could take four club tricks, but then had to lead a heart away from the queen. Declarer's jack of hearts became the fulfilling trick.



Cleveland Cavaliers' forward Shawn Kemp dunks the ball against the Miami Heat during the second quarter of NBA play at Miami Arena (Reuters photo)

Celtics beat Knicks; Hawks lose

BOSTON (AP) — The Boston Celtics ended their 21-game losing streak against New York on Monday night, beating the Knicks 94-85 behind 25 points from Chauncey Billups.

It was Boston's first win over New York since Jan. 10, 1993. The losing streak was the Celtics' longest ever against an opponent, while the 21 straight victories were the most by the Knicks against one team.

Antoine Walker had 16 points, six assists and seven rebounds for Boston. Allan Houston led New York with 21 points.

Toronto Raptors 91, Philadelphia 76ers 87: In Toronto, Oliver Miller got loose for a go-ahead layup with 3.5 seconds left and the Toronto Raptors tied a team record with their third straight win.

Miller, who scored nine points, made a layup with 21 seconds remaining that tied it at 87. Marcus Camby then lofted an inbounds pass over Derrick Coleman's reach and into the hands of Miller, who had an easy shot for the lead.

Doug Christie, who scored 26 points for the Raptors, intercepted Jim Jackson's pass with under three seconds left and dunked to seal the victory. Damon Stoudamire added 20 points and eight assists for Toronto.

Rookie Tim Thomas led the Sixers with 14 points while Allen Iverson scored only 13. Iverson missed nine minutes of the second quarter because of a cut that required five stitches to his upper lip.

Phoenix Suns 96, Atlanta Hawks 91: In Atlanta, Rex Chapman scored 13 of his 26 points in the third quarter and Danny Manning got nine of his 19 in the final period as the Phoenix Suns beat the Atlanta Hawks.

It was the fifth victory in six games for the Suns and the fourth loss in a row for Atlanta, which chopped a 12-point fourth-quarter deficit to 87-86 on Dikembe Mutombo's two free throws with 4:39 remaining.

But Mutombo missed four free throws in the final four minutes, and the Suns got baskets by Steve Nash, Mark Bryant and

Manning to keep the lead the rest of the way.

Steve Smith led the Hawks with 26 points and Mutombo added 20.

Cleveland Cavaliers 94, Miami Heat 93: In Miami, rookie centre Zydrunas Ilgauskas scored 23 points, including a free throw with 1.3 seconds left that gave Cleveland a victory over Miami.

The win was the third straight for the Cavaliers, who snapped a 10-game losing streak at Miami Arena.

Reserve centre Vitaly Potapenko had 18 points and Wesley Person added 16 for Cleveland. Tim Hardaway led the Heat with 33 points.

Trailing 88-81, the Heat rallied to tie at 93 on Hardaway's 3-point shot with 21.4 seconds left. The Cavs then worked for the final shot, and the 7-foot-3 (2.21-meter) Ilgauskas found himself free on the baseline and drew a foul from Jamal Mashburn.

Ilgauskas hit the first free throw and missed the second. Miami couldn't get a shot off, however, as Dan Majerle's inbounds pass was deflected as time expired.

San Antonio Spurs 115, Houston Rockets 90: At San Antonio, David Robinson scored 34 points and Avery Johnson added a season-high 27 as the San Antonio Spurs routed the Houston Rockets.

Vinny Del Negro added 17 points for the spurs, who have won 14 straight games at home. San Antonio made 21 of 23 free throws and shot 59 per cent from the field.

Charles Barkley had 19 points and 14 rebounds for Houston before he was ejected for arguing a call in the fourth quarter. Eddie Johnson added 14 points for the Rockets.

Sacramento Kings 111, Seattle SuperSonics 92: At Sacramento, California, Mitch Richmond scored 24 points as the Sacramento Kings snapped a five-game losing streak.

Vin Baker led Seattle with 20 points. Sam Perkins added 16 for the Sonics, who shot only 38 per cent from the field.

Brazilians want to rent Baggio

MILAN (AFP) — Italy's former World Cup hero Roberto Baggio could be heading for a new life in Brazil, it was reported on Tuesday.

Eduardo Jose Farah, head of the Sao Paulo Soccer Federation, is willing to pay Bologna \$10 million for their star striker, and then rent the 30-year-old out to one of the top clubs there, the Corriere dello Sport said.

Baggio, who is hugely popular in Brazil, would earn \$3 million a season for three years, playing for either Santos, Pele's old club, Palmeiras, Corinthians or Sao Paulo.

The idea follows Baggio's recent falling out with Bologna coach Renzo Ulivieri, after he refused to go on the subs' bench for the match against his old club, Juventus, and his subsequent walk out.

Baggio's reaction to the Brazil speculation was: "As you can see, outside Italy people still love me."

Before joining Bologna from AC Milan last summer, Baggio also had offers to join clubs from the English Premiership and the Japanese J-League. He turned them down in the hope of raising his profile in the Serie A and then winning himself a place in Italy's World Cup squad.

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Gambler Agassi will be back at the table

MELBOURNE (AFP) — Andre Agassi insists that defeat at the Australian Open will not kill his hunger to win more Grand Slams.

Like his old sparring rival Pete Sampras, the 27-year-old Agassi lives to win major titles.

The crowd was with the Las Vegas showman and many players were also willing him on at Melbourne Park on Monday night.

But many commentators said after Spaniard Alberto Berasategui won their fourth round clash that Agassi, a former World No. 1 and winner of Wimbledon, U.S. and Australian Open titles, is risking his reputation by going on.

Monday's match exposed Agassi's weakness in five-set tennis as he attempts to battle back into the men's top 50 this year. Agassi was two sets up, but Berasategui stepped up the pace and Agassi was left behind.

But the American cowed after the 3-6, 3-6, 6-2, 6-2, 6-3 loss that he would not give up.

"I've got to learn from the loss. That's all it is, a loss and you know it certainly is disappointing because it was a beautiful opportunity here," he said.

"I felt like, jeez, if I pick up my tennis one more level, I was just straight into the finals. This was a missed opportunity."

Agassi admitted he was



Sweden's Jonas Bjorkman plays a backhand during his quarterfinal match against Petr Korda of the Czech Republic at the Australian Open in Melbourne January 27. Korda beat Bjorkman 3-6 5-7 6-3 6-4 6-2 (Reuters photo)

just not ready for this Grand Slam.

But Agassi fuelled some doubts by saying he did not know when his next tournament would be.

"I am going to size it up, take some time to think about, make a good call," he said of his plans for the year.

Each win at the Open just encouraged him to believe that his comeback from second division satellite tournaments and a 141 ranking was charging ahead at full steam.

"I was going to sleep every night believing that I can do it right now. I can really start off the year with a big one."

Sampras, who is now fast running out of real chal-

lengers in Melbourne, certainly feels that Agassi is capable of winning a major title this year, as Agassi showed many glimpses of his past court dominating style.

But he also exposed some of his personal doubts.

"The ultimate question that everybody wants an answer to is what I can do again?" Agassi said.

"Can I play at the best level and can I win these tournaments and I think that question is still to be answered. I'm not here to say that I can."

In true Las Vegas style, Agassi will not be able to resist coming back to the table.

Australian Open Sampras, Bjorkman crash out, Davenport eliminates Williams Rios meets Berasategui in quarters today

MELBOURNE (AFP) — World No. 1 Pete Sampras crashed out of the Australian Open in the quarter-finals on Tuesday, losing in four sets to rising Slovakian star Karol Kucera.

The 26-year-old American put in his worst performance in months as he went down 6-4, 6-2, 6-7 (5/7), 6-3 to the 23-year-old Kucera, who is on a hot winning streak.

Sampras was outplayed in almost every area by the Slovak, who helped his country to the Hopman Cup mixed team title early this month in Perth and then took the men's singles title at the Sydney International.

"The way he played was unexpected," said Sampras. "He played the match of his life. I got a little impatient out there and missed some shots. It's disappointing, sure it is."

Kucera also ousted 10th-seed Sergi Bruguera of Spain in the first round as he set about his surprise

run in the Open.

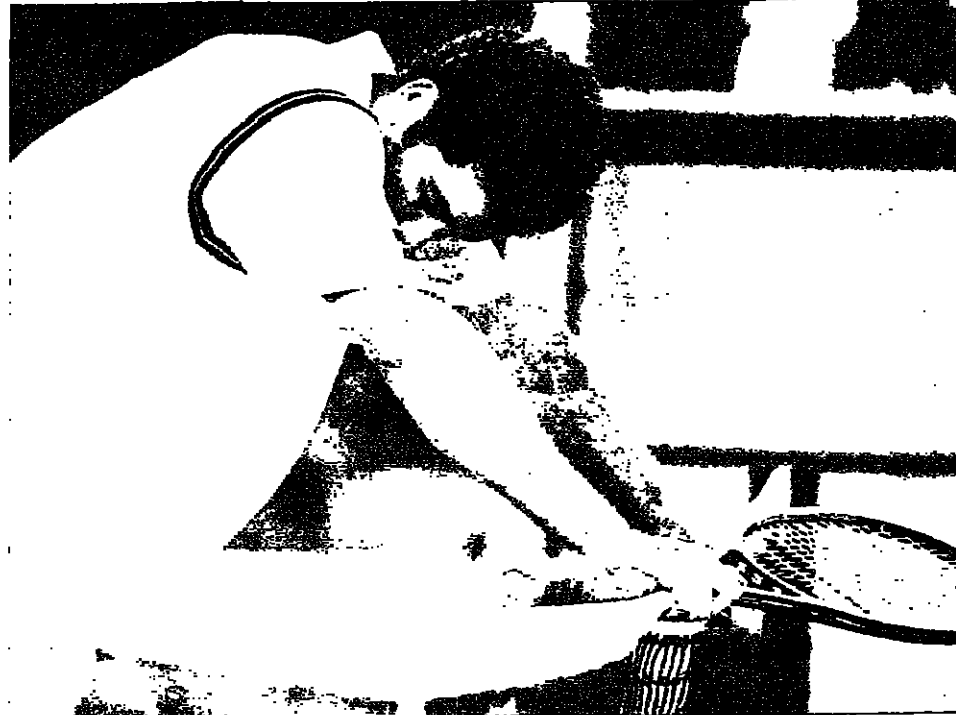
He said his wins had been "perfect" preparation to take on Sampras, whose 46 unforced errors highlighted his bad performance.

"My goal this year is not to lose a match," said Kucera, who said the first two sets of the 2hr 29min contest were the best tennis he had ever played.

Defeat was a blow to Sampras's chances of becoming the leading Grand Slam winner this year. He has won 10 major titles and needs three more to overtake Australian legend Roy Emerson.

In the semi-final, Kucera will take on veteran Czech Petr Korda, one of two surviving seeds in the men's contest. Left-hander Korda fought back for a 3-6, 5-7, 6-3, 6-4, 6-2 win over fourth-seeded Jonas Bjorkman of Sweden.

Korda and Bjorkman also played in the quarter-final of the U.S. Open in New York last September. Korda pulled out in the third set because of illness.



World No. 1 and defending champion Pete Sampras of the U.S. leans on the net during his quarter-final loss to Karol Kucera of Slovakia at the Australian Open in Melbourne. Kucera won in four sets 6-4 6-2 6-7 6-3 (Reuters photo)

"A lot of people punished me after that and this was a very special match for me," said the 30-year-old Czech, whose career has been blighted by illness and injury but has fought back to become World No. 7.

Bjorkman's surrender started in the third set after he seemed to be on course for a straight sets win.

The Czech left-hander clawed back with brilliant running and shots from narrow angles to break the Swede twice to take the third set. He broke Bjorkman's serve in the seventh game of the fourth set to force a decider.

As Bjorkman suffered cramps and tired, Korda took control, breaking Bjorkman in the third and fifth games to wrap up the match.

Chile's Marcelo Rios, the ninth seed, will play his quarter-final on Wednesday against Spain's Alberto Berasategui, with undeeded duo Nicolas Escude of France and Nicolas Kiefer of Germany meeting in the other quarter.

Berasategui has already beaten World No. 2 Pat Ruffier and former world No. 1 Andre Agassi in this event.

Women's No. 2 seed Lindsay Davenport also had to come back to beat brash teenager Venus Williams 1-6, 7-5, 6-3 in all-American battle for a semi-final place.

Davenport's semi-final will be against Conchita Martinez, the eighth seed from Spain, who beat an ailing Sandrine Testud, the French ninth seed, 6-3, 6-2.

Davenport's win got her into only her second Grand



Lindsay Davenport of the U.S. plays a backhand during her quarter final win over compatriot Venus Williams at the Australian Open. Davenport, the number two seed, won in three sets 1-6 7-5 6-3 (Reuters photo)

Slam semi-final.

The American came back after Williams played what she called "practically perfect" tennis in the first set.

"I don't think many people expected me to get to the semi-finals. Last week I was definitely overlooked, on the back page, but I wanted to win this match and get to the semi-finals and I've been able to get quietly through the draw," said Davenport.

"I'm seeded two, I've worked real hard for that, I wanted to win this match today and when I was down I fought hard because I wanted to show people that I'm the second seed and that I'm a dangerous player."

Williams tore apart the Davenport serve in the first set, but the 21-year-old Davenport battled back in the second after being 0-3 down at one point in the 100-minute match.

Young Bisharats impressive at Ramadan event

By Omar Karmi
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The young Ibrahim Bisharat, 13, showed some of his potential by taking overall first in the recently concluded Ramadan Equestrian Tournament at the Arabian Horse Club.

The four day event which was the first official tournament of the 1998 season organised by the Royal Jordanian Equestrian Federation (RJE), was held on successive Thursdays throughout Ramadan, and culminated in Tuesday's final day events, attended by HRH Princess Alia.

Apart from the last events in the two main categories — the 1.20metre and the 1.05m — the final day included a dressage show, and a puissance event, wherein the barrier is raised after successful jumps. The event was won by Faten Al Zyoud, who cleared 1.60m.

Hani Bisharat, Jordan's foremost rider, although eliminated early, carried on unof-

ficially and showed some of his class by clearing 1.90m.

By this time, however, Ibrahim Bisharat had already pipped his father, Hani, to the top spot in the 1.20m category, by winning the final day two phase event.

Although they finished even on points, Ibrahim had won the last tournament, and this was the deciding factor.

Fares Taher came third, and another Bisharat, Maysam, came fourth, proving that the Bisharat dynasty is alive and kicking.

Both Maysam and Ibrahim will join Hani in Lebanon in February for the first international tournament of the 1998 season in which Jordan is participating.

In the 1.05m category Amani Hilayel came first on the final day, but the young Zaid Shar'ab made waves with a stunning 54.88 seconds around the course, the fastest time.

Overall winner was Sa'ed Kilani with 29 points.



Venus Williams of the U.S. yells in frustration during her quarter-final loss to compatriot Lindsay Davenport. Davenport, the number two seed, won in three sets 1-6 7-5 6-3 (Reuters photo)

3 countries sign sports drug agreement

SYDNEY (AFP) — Australia, Canada and the United States on Tuesday entered into an agreement covering reciprocal drugs testing on athletes from each nation and research into banned substances.

The deal, which was 12 months in the planning, involves the Australian Sports Drug Agency (ASDA), the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport (CCES) and the United States Olympic Committee (USOC).

"The major benefit we see coming out of the agreement is three of the more influential anti-doping agencies getting together and pooling their resources in terms of general intelligence and particularly research," ASDA spokeswoman Vicki Kapernick told reporters here.

"We think if we have a more co-ordinated approach internationally in terms of research we've got a better chance of finding detection methods for things like human growth hormone and other undetectables we're having so much of a problem with right now."

"In the lead-up to Sydney 2000 you're going to see more and more Canadian and American athletes training and competing in Australia," she

said.

"This will allow ASDA to conduct tests on behalf of the Canadian and American author-

ities, which will be much more effective, allowing everyone to conduct tests when athletes are out of the country training."

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Iraq announces second month of reduced milk rations

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraq announced Tuesday that its infants will receive lower milk rations again next month and blamed the shortage on what Baghdad said were U.S. efforts to starve Iraqis.

Milk rations will be cut by 33 per cent for the month of February as Iraq did not receive milk during the second phase of its oil-for-food agreement with the United Nations, a commerce ministry spokesman said.

The U.S. administration persists in carrying out a policy of collective mas-

sacre of the Iraqi people and children," the spokesman was quoted by Radio Baghdad as saying.

He said each infant will get four 450-gramme boxes of powdered milk instead of the six mentioned on the ration cards.

"The U.S. administration, through its representative on the U.N. Sanctions Committee, did not approve the food contracts for phase two of the oil-for-food agreement," he added.

February will be "the second consecutive month that the ration cards did not

include all the milk rations for babies."

In January, infants' milk rations were also reduced from six boxes to four.

Since the oil-for-food accord went into effect in Dec. 1996, Iraq has regularly accused U.S. and British representatives on the U.N. committee that considers its food and medicine contracts of blocking or delaying them.

The U.N. Security Council renewed the accord for a third six-month period Dec. 5.

Under the agreement,

Baghdad may sell \$2 billion in crude oil every six months in order to buy food and medicine, pay war reparations and fund the work of the U.N. Special Commission on Disarming Iraq (UNSCOM).

The agreement was the first alleviation in the U.N. embargo imposed on Iraq after it invaded Kuwait in 1990.

UNSCOM's task is to verify whether Iraq has eliminated its weapons of mass destruction and long-range missiles, the condition for lifting the embargo.

Iraq says it has mobilised million people for training

BAGHDAD (AP) — Iraq has mobilised 1 million people to prepare for a possible U.S. strike, as university and high school students have registered for military training, officials of the ruling Baath Party said Monday.

Iraq's ambassador to the United Nations, Nizar Hamdoun, warned his country could respond to an American attack by ceasing to cooperate with the U.N. inspectors charged with supervising the elimination of Baghdad's weapons of mass destruction.

Iraqi Information Minister Humam Abdul-Khalik said Monday the United States was using the dispute over inspections as a pretext to launch a military attack against Iraq.

The U.S. and Britain have

reinforced their military forces in the Gulf in what is seen as preparation for a strike against Iraq over its refusal to allow U.N. weapons inspectors to visit presidential palaces.

U.S. President Clinton met his security advisers Saturday, and aides said he was considering military action to try to stop Iraq's blocking of the U.N. inspectors.

Earlier this month, Iraqi President Saddam Hussein called for every man and woman to be ready to bear arms to counter an attack against the country. The government said it would launch a volunteer program to train a million people in the use of firearms.

Baath Party officials told the Associated Press Monday that the target of 1

million volunteers had been reached as students at universities and high schools "have all registered."

The training would be carried out in school yards and other places, the officials said. No date was given, but the program is expected to begin shortly.

It is assumed the trainees will learn how to use AK-47 assault rifles, rocket-propelled grenades and hand grenades.

Party officials have not said how the training will prepare Iraqis to face missiles and other high-technology hardware in America's arsenal.

Apart from the training program, which is not the first of its kind in Iraq, there are no other signs that the country is preparing for an attack.

Baghdad's missiles could wreck Tel Aviv — Butler

NEW YORK (AFP) — Iraq has enough missile-driven biological weapons to devastate Tel Aviv, the head of the U.N. weapons inspection team in Iraq told Tuesday's New York Times.

Richard Butler said Baghdad possesses biological weapons containing "anthrax and botulin" that could "blow away" the Israeli city, the paper said.

He also said that while some of its missiles were quite crude, "they work." Mr. Butler confirmed that U.N. inspectors have evidence that Iraq has placed biological weapons on missile warheads and that Baghdad is bent on concealing evidence that it has biological and chemical weapons.

Iraqi officials have tampered with computer hard drives, burned documents in the presence of U.N. inspectors, and carried "suitcases through a garden wall" as inspectors arrived at one site, he said.

The U.N. Security Council is scheduled to meet this week to weigh options in the face of Iraq's continued opposition to the presence of U.N. weapons inspectors at certain sites.

The United States reportedly favours military action. Mr. Butler said the Security Council has a range of options that includes expanding the no-flight zone and blockading the Iraqi port of Basra to put a stop to illegal oil trade.



RESEMBLING MONICA: An Iraqi woman balances on her head a sack with a drawing of a woman who strongly resembles Monica Lewinsky, the young woman at the center of the sex scandal threatening U.S. President Bill Clinton's presidency, Tuesday in Baghdad. Iraq has accused Mr. Clinton of considering a military strike on Baghdad in order to divert attention from the scandal (AFP photo)

Lewinsky not out to get U.S. president — lawyer

Ginsburg says his client should not emigrate to Israel now to preserve image, afterwards, a good opportunity

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Monica Lewinsky, the former White House intern at the centre of the sex scandal surrounding U.S. President Bill Clinton, is a firm supporter of the U.S. president and has no intention of trying to bring him down, her lawyer told an Israeli newspaper.

In an interview published Tuesday in the Yediot Achronot, Attorney William Ginsburg said Ms. Lewinsky, 24, remained a "supporter" of Mr. Clinton "and as a Jew appreciates his policy towards Israel."

"Clinton is very pro-Israel and Monica and myself, as

Jews, appreciate this," he was quoted as saying.

Mr. Ginsburg said his client is seeking immunity from prosecution in exchange for "telling the whole truth" about her alleged relationship with Mr. Clinton when she was a White House intern three years ago.

But he added that "Monica has no intention of trying to bring down the president" with her testimony. "On the contrary," he said.

According to a special prosecutor, the American president had a sexual relationship with Ms. Lewinsky

and then pressured her to lie about it under oath in connection with a sexual harassment suit against the president.

Mr. Clinton flatly denied the allegations on Monday. Asked whether Ms. Lewinsky might consider emigrating to Israel, once the Clinton affair is resolved, Mr. Ginsburg said, "I don't think it would be good for her image right now. She has to go through with this affair."

"Afterwards, if she wants to emigrate to Israel, I think it would be a fantastic opportunity. She would be great there."

Israel tries to defend its peace stance to doubting Europeans

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu dispatched his top diplomatic advisor to France and Britain Tuesday to defend Israel's tough stance in U.S.-brokered negotiations with the Palestinians, Israeli Radio reported.

Uzi Arad was scheduled to meet with French officials in Paris and then head to London, which currently holds the rotating presidency of the European Union (EU), the radio said.

Mr. Netanyahu's office refused to comment on the report.

Mr. Arad's mission appeared to be an attempt to counter Palestinian claims that Mr. Netanyahu is to blame for the prolonged deadlock in the Middle East peace process following an unsuccessful round of top-level meetings in Washington last week.

Israel's ambassadors to the 15 EU member states were also due to meet in London Tuesday to discuss how best to defend Israel's position, the radio said.

Mr. Netanyahu and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat met separately with U.S. President Bill Clinton last week but failed to make concrete progress on the key issues blocking the peace

process — Israel's refusal to carry out promised troop pullbacks from the West Bank and Palestinian attacks on Israel.

Mr. Netanyahu rebuffed U.S. demands that he begin immediately carrying out a significant troop pullback from the West Bank, saying his right-wing cabinet would only approve a modest transfer of territory and then only after the Palestinians meet a long list of conditions notably focusing on combating guerrilla violence.

Monday Mr. Netanyahu softened his position somewhat, saying he could envision a U.S.-proposed compromise under which one troop pullback could be carried out in phases coinciding with Palestinian compliance with Israeli demands.

But he has refused to provide any figures for the amount of land Israel is willing to cede.

Mr. Arafat visited Paris last week and London on Monday and received sympathetic hearings in both capitals for his complaints about Mr. Netanyahu's stand.

British officials notably described as "not wise" an Israeli demand that the Palestine National Council, the Palestinians' top decision-making body, convene

to renew a 1996 decision cancelling parts of the Palestinian covenant challenging Israel's right to exist.

Mr. Arafat has refused to reconvene the more than 500-member council, saying the offending clauses in the charter had already been cancelled at an April 1996 meeting and that Israel's former Labour government and the United States had agreed that was sufficient.

France and Britain have also backed U.S. demands that Mr. Netanyahu quickly go ahead with a significant troop withdrawal from the West Bank.

Press reports said Washington wants Israel to cede at least 12 per cent of the West Bank at this time and hand over more land in mid-1998 as required under a January 1997 agreement.

Mr. Netanyahu has reportedly said he will yield a maximum of nine per cent of the West Bank at this stage. Palestinians currently have full or partial control over 27 per cent of the territory.

Queen Elizabeth anxious to get Fergie out of marital home

LONDON (AFP) — Britain's Queen Elizabeth has offered the Duchess of York and her two daughters, Princesses Beatrice and Eugenie, a \$8 million home in Windsor Great Park. The Sun daily said the queen was anxious to get Fergie, as the duchess is popularly known, out of Sunninghill, the marital home she shares with Prince Andrew despite their divorce, finalised in 1996. Fergie has often complained she was short-changed in her divorce compared with the \$27.5 million Diana, Princess of Wales got in her settlement from Prince Charles, and has not been given the status she deserves.

Madonna to play woman reconciling with AIDS-stricken brother

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Madonna is expected to play a woman reconciling with her AIDS-stricken brother in her first starring role since "Evita". The entertainer agreed to star in "The Red Door", directed by Mattia Karel, a week after participating in a reading of the script alongside Stockard Channing and Rod Steiger. Daily Variety reported. Madonna plays a woman who, with her brother, endured an abusive childhood at the hands of their father. The siblings drift apart but reconcile when he becomes sick with AIDS.

Claudia Schiffer says she's worth every penny

BONN (AFP) — Supermodel Claudia Schiffer says she works hard for her money, and if that means getting 80 times as much as German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, tough. In an interview with the German news magazine Stern, she insisted she was "not an object you can just hire like a car." Asked if it was fair that while Kohl earns \$192,000 a year, she gets \$16 million for putting on a few clothes, she had replied: "The way you say it, it sounds bad [but] it's not true that I just put on a few clothes and get a cheque for it afterwards. There is a lot of work behind all that."

Marijuana cures hiccups

PARIS (AFP) — Marijuana cured a man's hiccups after doctors spent seven days fruitlessly trying to conquer the persistent tic with acupuncture and drugs, the British medical journal The Lancet reported. The patient had not smoked marijuana before, but took the drug to relieve the pain of the hiccups and they immediately stopped. When they recurred a day later, he smoked some more. Again, they stopped straight afterward, and this time did not happen again. Although marijuana is forbidden for therapeutic uses in the United States, the doctors said the drug should be considered when other treatments against persistent hiccups fail.

Salesman declares love on French billboard

BESANCON (AFP) — A love-struck bathroom salesman has launched a most heart-felt sales pitch: proclaiming his love on a huge billboard to a woman he meets every day but has never spoken to. "Nadine, I love you. You will be the woman of my life," pleads the message on the 12 square metres advertising hoarding. It is sited on the path that the woman, a single mother, takes every day as she leaves her children off to school in this town in eastern France. The multi-coloured poster, with heart-shaped dots above each "I", will stay up for a week thanks to an advertising company which, touched by his love, offered the prime location for nothing.

Powerful multi-service U.S. force in Arabian Gulf keeps pressure on Iraq

WASHINGTON (R) — The United States has assembled a powerful multi-service force to keep pressure on Iraq in the standoff over U.N. access to suspected weapons sites, U.S. military officials said on Monday.

Two aircraft carrier battle groups with 108 embarked tactical aircraft are patrolling the Gulf, providing a capability to hit targets 1,600 km or more away with high-technology weapons.

Overall, about 25,000 U.S. personnel have been deployed afloat and ashore in the region, including about 8,000 airmen and 3,000 army troops, according to the U.S. central command, responsible for coordinating U.S. forces in the region.

About 175 U.S. air force aircraft are assigned to the area for air interdiction, close air support, suppression of enemy air defences, electronic warfare, surveillance and reconnaissance, combat search and rescue, and command and control of air operations.

Among these are six F-117 radar-evading Stealth fighters based in Kuwait and eight B-52 long-range strategic bombers. The B-52s, able to fire cruise missiles with a range of 12,400 km, are based on the

British Indian Ocean island of Diego Garcia.

Other air force assets in the region include 24 F-16C (GJ) Fighting Falcon ground-attack aircraft and two B-1 Supersonic long-range bombers for knocking out armoured columns.

In any bombing campaign against Iraq, the air force would rely on some of the same precision-guided munitions used in the 1991 Gulf war that drove Iraq from Kuwait, including 900 kg laser-guided bombs to destroy hardened targets such as aircraft hangars.

The navy's battle groups, built around the carriers Nimitz and George Washington, comprise 14 warships with about 14,100 sailors and marines aboard.

Included are the guided-missile cruiser Normandy, the destroyers Barry, Casey, Ingersoll and John Young, the guided-missile frigates Reuben James and Samuel B. Roberts, the attack submarine Annapolis, fast combat support ship Seattle and mine countermeasures ships Ardent and Dextrous.

Among the navy's embarked aircraft are F-14A Tomcat air superiority fighters, F/A-18C Hornet multi-role fighters, EA-6B Prowler radar-jammers and

E-2C Hawkeye airborne radar craft.

The navy arsenal includes heat-seeking sidewinder air-to-air missiles, Harpoon anti-ship missiles and high-speed harm anti-radiation missiles designed to destroy ground-to-air missile sites, as well as Tomahawk land-strike cruise missiles with a range of about 1,600 km.

Another carrier, the Independence, and its battle group is on its way to the Gulf from the Pacific. It will replace the Nimitz, probably by mid-February, a navy official said. The Independence group has five ships with 54 tactical aircraft aboard.

Outside the Gulf, in the northern Arabian Sea, the Tomahawk-capable attack submarine Olympia is on patrol, the navy said.

About 1,500 of the U.S. army troops in the region are taking part in intrinsic action wargames in Kuwait that began Jan. 20 and are scheduled to continue until mid-April, Pentagon officials said.

Britain has sent the aircraft carrier invincible to the Gulf in a show of solidarity with U.S. determination to force Iraq to give unrestricted access to U.N. weapons inspectors.

Algeria forces kill 6 Islamists, peasants flee — papers

PARIS (R) — Algerian security forces killed six suspected rebels in northeastern Algeria as peasants in mass-sacre-stricken areas fled farms, piling more economic pressures on the government, national dailies said on Tuesday.

More than 1,200 civilians have died in massacres since the start of the Holy Month of Ramadan on Dec. 30.

Al Khabar newspaper said government forces shot dead six Islamist rebels and wounded another in an ambush overnight Sunday-Monday in Bouira province, 90 km east of the capital Algiers.

The rebels were suspected of belonging to a group that massacred 13 villagers in the region early this month, it

said. Hundreds of frightened peasants in the rich farming province of Chlef, 150 km west of Algiers, were fleeing homes and streaming into more secure towns, leaving farms untended and cattle abandoned. Al Khabar reported on Tuesday.

The newspaper said the exodus was triggered by the killing of three shepherds and a 60-year-old man in the region six days ago.

The authorities blame the bloodshed on Islamist rebels. "Several hundred villagers, many of them poor peasants, took to the roads in the exodus, carrying their modest belongings on mules. They abandoned cattle and farms," Al Khabar said.

The daily said the exodus,

which began in the Miudja farm lands near Algiers, extended after the massacres of civilians in western Algeria this month. The worst-hit provinces were Relizane and Tiaret, also rich agricultural land.

Liberte newspaper, summing up a grim mood, said the government faced an increasing struggle to tackle worsening security and social situations.

"Algeria has never faced such a succession of events as it did during the month of Ramadan: armed groups continued their blind and destructive logic while more enterprises were going out of business and the crude oil price was tumbling."